ARISTOPHANES

THE ACHARNIANS, THE KNIGHTS AND THE BIRDS

A Metrical Version

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMENT

BY

JOHN HOOKHAM FRERE

INTRODUCTION.

ARISTOPHANES, son of Philippus, was born in Athens about the year 444 before Christ, and lived probably to the age of about seventy-six. He made social as well as political use of his wit, and wrote (B.C. 427) his first comedy, "The Banquetters," when he was yet a youth below the legal age for competing for a prize. That comedy was the satire of one fresh from the schools upon the sophistries that had crept into the Athenian system of education. There was a father whose two sons had been educated, one in the good old way, the other in the new way, and the chorus, which gave its name to the play, was of a party who had been feasting in the temple of Hercules. That play is known only by tradition; and the next play, "The Babylonians," produced in the next year in the name of Callistratus, is also lost. It obtained the first prize, and was a political caricature of the system of appointing to public offices by lot. Next followed, and in the next year (B.C. 425), also produced in the name of Callistratus, "The Acharnians," the first play in this volume, produced when the poet's age was about nineteen. "The Knights" —the second play here given—followed a year later, and was the first play produced by Aristophanes in his own name. Each of these plays won the first prize in competition. The other plays —omitting those which have been lost and are known only by tradition—were: "The Clouds" (B.C. 423); "The Wasps" (B.C. 422); "Peace" (B.C. 419); "The Birds" (B.C. 414); "Lysistrata" (B.C. 411); "Plutus" (B.C. 408); "The Frogs" (B.C. 405); "Ecclesiazusæ (B.C. 392). But Aristophanes is said to have written in all fifty-four plays. His three sons, Philippus, Araros, and Nicostratus, were all poets of what is called the Middle Comedy; Aristophanes himself being the only one of many writers of the Old Comedy of whom any complete work is left.

Frere's translations of some of the plays of Aristophanes have a permanent place in English literature, and are entitled to wide popularity. John Hookham Frere was not only a fine scholar, but a man of genius, with wit and humour of his own, whose writings are too good to be reserved for the enjoyment of a few.

He was born in May 1769, of a family that had lived for some time at Thwait Hall, near Finningham, in Suffolk, before it changed its seat to Roydon Hall, near Diss, in Norfolk. The father of John Hookham Frere was a John Frere, who was second wrangler at Cambridge in 1763, when the senior wrangler was William Paley. In 1768 John Frere married a lady who had been unusually well educated, Jane Hookham, only child of a rich London merchant; and in the following year John Hookham Frere was the first child of the marriage. John Frere's sister, who was also a very accomplished woman, married Sir John Fenn, editor of "The Paston Letters."

Hookham Frere was sent to Eton, from a school at Putney, when sixteen years old; he established there a close and life-long friendship with George Canning. In November 1786, in his second year at Eton, Frere was with Canning among those Eton boys who started "The Microcosm," perhaps the most famous of school magazines. From Eton, Frere went to Caius College, Cambridge, and he was a freshman there in 1790, when there appeared in Ellis's "Specimens of the Early English Poets" a metrical version of the Anglo-Saxon poem on the Battle of Brunanburgh, of which James Mackintosh said in his History of England, "it is a double imitation, unmatched perhaps in literary history, in which the writer gave an earnest of that faculty of catching the peculiar genius and preserving the characteristic manner of his original, which, though the specimens of it be too few, places him alone among English translators." Frere wrote it when at Eton. Scott spoke of it also in his "Essay on Imitation of the Ancient Ballads" as the only poem he had met with which, if it had been produced as ancient, could not have been detected on internal evidence." Frere graduated B.A. in 1792, Canning in 1793. Frere took his M.A. in 1795; and was made a Fellow of his College. He then entered the Foreign Office, and in 1796 became member for a Cornish pocket borough.

In 1797 John Hookham Frere joined Canning, George Ellis, and others in establishing the "Antijacobin," and in the poetry of the "Antijacobin" contributed his full share to the light battery of wit with which it assailed what it took to be revolutionary extravagances.

In 1799 Frere became Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office, succeeding Canning, who went to the Board of Trade. In October 1800 he was appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Portugal; and in September 1802 he was transferred from Portugal to Spain. He remained there as British Minister at Madrid till August 1804, when he was succeeded by the Marquis Wellesley. The Ministry at home made him a Privy Councillor and gave him a pension. Walter Scott's "Sir Tristrem" was published in that year 1804:

Frere, who delighted in old ballad and romance, spoke with admiration of it to George Ellis. Ellis reported this to Scott, who replied, "Frere is so perfect a master of the ancient style of composition that I would rather have his suffrage than a whole synod of your vulgar antiquaries." Frere's contact with Spain caused him to translate parts of the "Poem of the Cid," and Southey in April 1808 wrote to Scott: "I saw Frere in London, and he has promised to let me print his translations from the 'Poema del Cid.' They are admirably done. Indeed, I never saw anything so difficult to do, and done so excellently, except your supplement to Sir Tristrem." In 1807 Frere's father died, and he inherited the family estates; his mother and an unmarried sister, Susan, maintaining home for him at Roydon Hall. In 1808 Hookham Frere was sent to Spain again, accredited as British Envoy and Plenipotentiary to the Central Junta. The King of Spain recognised Frere's services in critical times by conferring on him a Castilian title of honour—Marquez de la Union. In 1809 he returned, and withdrew at the age of forty, from active political life. In September 1816 he married the Dowager Countess of Erroll, to whom he was strongly attached, and who had, beyond beauty, wit and wisdom of her own for the appreciation of his genius. It was she who urged him to print his first part of the "Monks and Giants," as "prospectus and specimen of an intended national work by William and Robert Whistlecraft, of Stowmarket, in Suffolk, harness and collar makers, intended to comprise the most interesting particulars relating to King Arthur and his Round Table." This piece of pure and delightful playfulness was published in 1817. Byron —who recognised Frere's hand—wrote of it: "Mr. Whistlecraft has no greater admirer than myself. I have written a story in eighty-nine stanzas in imitation of him, called 'Beppo.'" And again he wrote of "Beppo" to Murray: "The style is not English, it is Italian: Berni is the original of all; Whistlecraft was my immediate model." Southey afterwards wrote of poems in this manner: "Frere began it; what he produced was too good in itself and too inoffensive to become popular, for it attacked nothing and nobody."

In July 1820 appeared in the "Quarterly Review" an article on "Aristophanes" that attracted much attention. It was Frere's only contribution to the "Quarterly," and it included doctrine and illustration of his own principles applied to such translation. Frere had been translating Aristophanes from time to time for his own pleasure and the entertainment of friends. In June 1817, when Coleridge at Highgate wanted somebody to meet the German poet Tieck, he wrote to Crabb Robinson: "I should be most happy to make him and that admirable man Mr. Frere acquainted. Their pursuits have been so similar; and to convince Mr. Tieck that he is *the* man among us in whom

taste at its maximum has vitalized itself into productive power—Genius. You need only show him the incomparable translation annexed to Southey's 'Cid,' and I would finish the work off by Mr. Frere's Aristophanes."

In 1820 the failing health of Lady Erroll caused Frere to quit England, and he settled with his wife and sister at Malta in 1821. His best friend, Canning, died in 1827; his wife died in January 1831. In the November of that year, Sir Walter Scott, on his way to Naples, when his life was ebbing, was affectionately received by Frere at Malta. Coleridge, whom Frere held in high esteem, died in 1834; and to Mr. Gillman, who had watched over his last years, he said in his will: "As the most expressive way in which I can only mark my relation to him, and in remembrance of a great and good man, revered by us both, I leave the manuscript volume lettered 'Arist. Manuscript—Birds, Acharnians, Knights,' presented to me by my dear friend and patron, the Right Hon. John Hookham Frere, who, of all men I have had the means of knowing during my life, appears to me eminently to deserve to be characterized as *ὁ καλοκἄγαθος, ὁ φιλόκαλος*." Frere's sister and house companion died in 1839, and was buried by the side of his wife. He also was laid beside her in the English burial-ground at Malta in January 1846.

The present edition of Frere's translation of "The Acharnians," "The Knights," and "The Birds" has been printed direct from copies printed for himself at Malta in 1839, and published by Pickering in 1840. "The Works of John Hookham Frere, in Verse and Prose, now first collected, with a Prefatory Memoir by his nephews, W. E. and Sir Bartle Frere," were published in 1872, in volumes of which a handsome popular edition would be a delight to many readers.

H. M.

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THE ACHARNIANS.

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DICÆOPOLIS, whose name may be interpreted as conveying the idea of honest policy, is the principal character in the play. He is represented as a humorous, shrewd countryman (a sort of Athenian Sancho), who (in consequence of the war, and the invasion of Attica by the Peloponnesian army) had been driven from his house and property to take shelter in the city. Here his whole thoughts are occupied with regret for the comforts he has lost, and with wishes for a speedy peace. The soliloquy in which he appears in the first scene, represents him seated alone in the place of Assembly, having risen early to secure a good place, his constant practice (he says), in order "to bawl, to abuse and interrupt the speakers," with the exception of those, and those only, who are arguing in favour of an immediate peace. But the magistrates and men of business, not having so much leisure on their hands as the worthy countryman, are less punctual in their attendance, and he is kept waiting, to his great discomfort; their seats are empty, and the citizens in the market-place are talking and idling, or shifting about to avoid a most notable instrument of democratic coercion—namely, a cord coloured with ochre, which the officers stretch across the market-place in order to drive the loiterers to the place of Assembly; those that are overtaken by the rope, being marked by the ochre, besides the damage to their dress, becoming liable to a nominal fine. To avoid the sense of weariness, he is in the habit (as he tells us), upon such occasions, of giving a forced direction to his thoughts; and he gives a sample of his mode of employing this expedient, in the very first lines: he is tasking himself to recollect and sum up all the things that had occurred of late either to gratify or to annoy him. At length, however, he is relieved from the pursuit of this unsatisfactory pastime. The magistrates arrive and take their seats—the place of Assembly is filled, and silence is proclaimed—when a new

personage enters hastily. Here we have an instance of the peculiar character of invention which belongs to the ancient comedy; in which a bodily form and action is given to those images which have no existence except in the forms of animated or fanciful language. "If a deity were to come down among the Athenians and propose to conclude a peace for them, they would not listen to him"—this phrase is here exhibited in action; for the personage above mentioned is a demigod (descended immediately from Ceres herself, as he proves by a very rapid and confident recitation of his genealogy), but his offer of his services as a mediator are very ill received, and he very narrowly escapes being taken into custody.

The next persons who present themselves to the Assembly are two Envoys returned from a mission to the Court of Persia, which they have contrived to prolong for several years. They relate all the hardships which they had undergone in luxurious entertainments and in tedious journeys with a splendid equipage: they moreover had been detained by an unforeseen circumstance on their arrival at the capital. The state of things was such as Autolycus describes: "The King is not at the palace, he is gone to purge melancholy and air himself:" but the King of Persia was not gone, like the King of Bohemia, "on board a new ship;" he was gone with a magnificent military retinue to the Golden Mountains, where, according to the Ambassadors' report, he continued for eight months in an unremitting course of cathartics. On his return to the capital, they had the honour of being presented, and entertained at a most singular and marvellous banquet; finally, they had succeeded in their mission, and had brought with them a confidential servant of the Crown of Persia (a nobleman of high rank, though rather of a suspicious name), Shamartabas, commissioned to declare His Majesty's intention to the people of Athens. Shamartabas holds the distinguished office and title of the King's Eye: of course the mask which is assigned him is distinguished by an eye of enormous size, the appearance of which and the gravity of gesture suited to such an exalted personage excite the rustic republican spleen of honest Dicæopolis. The communications of the great Persian courtier, being in his own language and consequently unintelligible, are variously interpreted. Dicæopolis takes upon himself to question him peremptorily, and in the course of the examination discovers a couple of effeminate Athenian fops, disguised as eunuchs, in his train; this discovery, however, creates no sensation. The King's Eye is invited with the usual honours to a banquet in the Prytaneum; but when Dicæopolis sees these impostors and enemies of his country upon the point of being rewarded with a good dinner, the indignation which is excited in his independent spirit decides at

once his future destinies and the conduct of all the scenes which follow. In that tone which a person is apt to employ when he fancies that the zeal of his friends gives him a right to command their services, he calls out very peremptorily for Amphitheus, and without any preamble or prefatory request, directs him to proceed to Sparta without loss of time, and to conclude a separate peace for him (Dicæopolis), his wife and family, advancing to him at the same time the principal sum of eight drachmas for that purpose.

Another Envoy now appears, returned from a Court of a different description. He has not, like the former, any complaints to make of having been overwhelmed with an excess of ostentation and and profusion from the Grand Monarque of those times; he has resided with a sort of contemporary Czar Peter, the Autocrat of Thrace, having lived (of course according to his own account) in a most jolly barbarous intimacy with that rising potentate, and inspiring him with the sincerest hearty zeal in favour of the polished state of Athens. His son, the heir apparent, had been admitted by the Athenians to the freedom of their city, an honour which, in their opinion (as well as in that of Mr. Peter Putty in Foote's farce), any prince ought to be proud of; and the Assembly are accordingly informed of the delight and enthusiasm with which the compliment had been accepted. They are presented moreover with a specimen of the auxiliary troops, somewhat singularly equipped, which their new ally is willing to employ in their service, but at a rate of pay which Dicæopolis exclaims against as scandalous. He has soon other causes of complaint; for attracted by the passion for garlic, which it seems is predominant amongst them, the Odomantians (for that is the name of the tribe to which the new warriors belong) begin their operations by plundering the store which Dicæopolis had provided for his own luncheon; outrageous at this injury, after reproaching the magistrates with their apathy in suffering it, he takes, what it seems was an effectual mode of dissolving the Assembly, by declaring that a storm is coming on, and affirming that he has felt a drop of rain. This sort of Polish veto nullifies the proceedings of the Assembly, which is accordingly dissolved. Dicæopolis is left lamenting over the pillage of his provisions, but his spirits are soon revived by the appearance of Amphitheus, who has returned with samples of treaties of peace or truces. These treaties or truces are typified by the wines employed in the libations by which they were ratified; a conceit, which in the language of the original appears less extravagant, the Greeks having only one and the same word by which they expressed the idea of a truce and that of the libation by which it was rendered valid. Amphitheus is in a hurry, having been (as he says) discovered and pursued by a

number of old rustics of Acharnæ, who since the ruin of the vineyards of their village by the invading army, had become furious against a peace. Dicæopolis tastes and discusses the qualities of the wines, and having fixed upon a sample of thirty years' growth, goes away with a determination to avail himself of the change in his affairs, by keeping the Feast of Bacchus once more in his own village; while Amphitheus runs off to avoid the Acharnians whom he had outrun, but who are still in quest of him.

SCENE.—*The Pnyx.*

DICÆOPOLIS.

How many things there are to cross and vex me,
My comforts I compute at four precisely,
My griefs and miseries at a hundred thousand.
Let's see what there has happened to rejoice me
With any real kind of joyfulness;
Come, in the first place I set down five talents,
Which Cleon vomited up again and refunded;
There I rejoiced; I loved the knights for that;
'Twas nobly done, for the interests of all Greece.
But again I suffered cruelly in the theatre
A tragical disappointment—There was I
Gaping to hear old Æschylus, when the Herald
Called out, "Theognis,* bring your chorus forward."
Imagine what my feelings must have been!
But then Dexitheus pleased me coming forward
And singing his Bœotian melody:
But next came Chæris with his music truly,
That turned me sick, and killed me very nearly.
But never in my lifetime, man nor boy,
Was I so vexed as at this present moment;
To see the Pnyx, at this time of the morning,
Quite empty, when the Assembly should be full.
There are our citizens in the market-place,
Lounging and talking, shifting up and down

* A bad tragic poet, ridiculed in this play.

To escape the painted twine that ought to sweep
The shoal of them this way; not even the Presidents
Arrived—they're always last, crowding and jostling
To get the foremost seat; but as for peace
They never think about it—Oh, poor country!
As for myself, I'm always the first man.
Alone in the morning, here I take my place,
Here I contemplate, here I stretch my legs;
I think and think—I don't know what to think.
I draw conclusions and comparisons,
I ponder, I reflect, I pick my nose,
I make a stink—I make a metaphor,
I fidget about, and yawn and scratch myself;
Looking in vain to the prospect of the fields,
Loathing the city, longing for a peace,
To return to my poor village and my farm,
That never used to cry "Come buy my charcoal!"
Nor, "Buy my oil!" nor "Buy my anything!"
But gave me what I wanted, freely and fairly,
Clear of all cost, with never a word of buying,
Or such buy-words. So here I'm come, resolved
To bawl, to abuse, to interrupt the speakers,
Whenever I hear a word of any kind
Except for an immediate peace. Ah there!
The Presidents at last; see, there they come!
All scrambling for their seats—I told you so!

HERALD. Move forward there! Move forward all of ye
Further! within the consecrated ground.

AMPHITHEUS. Has anybody spoke?

HER. Is anybody
Prepared to speak?

AMP. Yes, I.

HER. Who are you and what?

AMP. Amphitheus the demigod.

HER. Not a man?

A

AMP. No, I'm immortal; for the first Amphitheus
Was born of Ceres and Triptolemus,
His only son was Keleüs, Keleüs married
Phænarete my grandmother, Lykinus
My father, was their son; that's proof enough
Of the immortality in our family.
The gods moreover have dispatched me here
Commissioned specially to arrange a peace
Betwixt this city and Sparta—notwithstanding
I find myself rather in want at present
Of a little ready money for my journey.
The magistrates won't assist me.

HER. Constables!

AMP. O Keleüs and Triptolemus, don't forsake me!

DIC. You Presidents, I say! you exceed your powers;
You insult the Assembly, dragging off a man
That offered to make terms and give us peace.

HER. Keep silence there.

DIC. By Jove, but I won't be silent,
Except I hear a motion about peace.

HER. Ho there! the Ambassadors from the King of Persia.

DIC. What King of Persia? what Ambassadors?
I'm sick of foreigners and foreign animals,
Peacocks* and coxcombs and Ambassadors.

HER. Keep silence there.

DIC. What's here? What dress is that?
In the name of Ecbatana!† What does it mean?

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* Peacocks had been introduced at the public charge, and were exhibited monthly. It is to be supposed that the exhibition had become rather stale.

† The name of an unknown and extraordinary place is sometimes used to express wonder. In New England a thing is said to be "Jerusalem fine." Flanders in the time of Philip III. served the Spaniards for a phrase of wonder, "No hay mas Flandes."

AMB. You sent us when Euthymenes was Archon,
Some few years back, Ambassadors to Persia,
With an appointment of two drachmas each
For daily maintenance.

DIC. Alas, poor drachmas!

AMB. 'Twas no such easy service, I can tell you,
No trifling inconvenience to be dragged
Along those dusty dull Caystrian plains,
Smothered with cushions in the travelling chariots,
Obliged to lodge at night in our pavilions,
Jaded and hacked to death.

DIC. My service then
Was an easy one, you think! on guard all night,
In the open air, at the outposts, on a mat.

AMB. . . . . At our reception we were forced to drink
Strong luscious wine in cups of gold and crystal . . . .

DIC. O rock of Athens! sure thy very stones
Should mutiny at such open mockery!

AMB. [*in continuation*]
. . . . with the barbarians 'tis the test of manhood.
There the great drinkers are the greatest men . . . .

DIC. As debauchees and coxcombs are with us.

AMB. [*in continuation*]
. . . . In the fourth year we reached the royal residence,
But found the Sovereign absent on a progress,
Gone with his army to the Golden Mountains,
To take his ease, and purge his royal person;
There he remained eight months.

DIC. When did he close
His course of medicine?

AMB. With the full of the moon
He rose, and left his seat, returning homeward:
There he admitted us to an audience,
And entertained us at a royal banquet
With a service of whole oxen baked in crust

DIC. Oxen in crust! what lies, what trumpery!
Did ever any mortal hear the like?

AMB. Besides they treated us with a curious bird,
Much bigger than our own Cleonymus.
'Tis called the Chousibas.

DIC. Ay, by that same token
We're choused of our two drachmas.

AMB. Finally,
We've brought you here a nobleman, Shamartabas
By name, by rank and office the King's Eye.

DIC. God send a crow to pick it out, I say,
And yours the Ambassador's into the bargain!

HER. Let the King's Eye come forward.

DIC. Hercules!
What's here? an eye for the head of a ship!* what point,
What headland is he weathering? what's your course?
What makes you steer so steadily and so slowly?

AMB. Come now, Shamartabas, stand forth; declare
The King's intentions to the Athenian people.

[SHAMARTABAS *here utters some words, which Orientalists have supposed to be the common formula prefixed to the edicts of the Persian Monarch.*—
Iartaman exarksan apissonai satra.]

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* The imaginative spirit of antiquity had transformed the head of a ship into the likeness of a human face; the keel served for a nose, a painted eye being inserted on each side, and a portion of the convex projections of the bow was coloured red, to represent a pair of cheeks, whence the epithet "red-cheeked" is applied to ships in Homer. The face thus produced was appropriated to Medusa by the addition of two snakes *diverging from it*, and running along the gunwale (according to Hipponax's description "as if they were going to bite the head of the steersman"). The whole vessel was thus converted into the form of a protecting amulet. It appears by what Herodotus says of the oracle addressed to the Siphnians, that the "red cheeks" must have gone out of fashion in his time; but the "eye" is still universal in the Mediterranean, and the writer of this note has seen the snake in its proper position and direction, on the gunwale of small craft in the harbour of Valletta and in the Bay of Cadiz.

AMB. You understand it?

DIC. No, by Jove, not I.

AMB. [*to* DICÆOPOLIS] He says the King intends to send us gold.

[*to* SHAMARTABAS] Explain about the gold; speak more distinctly.

SHAMARTABAS. Sen gooly Jaönau aphooly chest.

DIC. Well, that's distinct enough!

HER. What does he say?

DIC. That it's a foolish jest for the Ionians
To imagine that the King would send them gold.

AMB. No, no!—He's telling ye of chests full of gold.

DIC. What chests? you're an impostor.—Stand away
Keep off; and let me alone to question him.

[*to* SHAMARTABAS]

You Sir, you Persian! answer me distinctly
And plainly, in presence of this fist of mine;
On pain of a royal purple bloody nose.
Will the King send us gold, or will he not?

[SHAMARTABAS *shakes his head*]

Have our Ambassadors bamboozled us?

[SHAMARTABAS *nods*]

These fellows nod to us in the Grecian fashion;
They're some of our own people, I'll be bound.
One of those eunuchs there I'm sure I know:
I'm positive it's Cleisthenes the Siburtian.
How durst you, you baboon, with such a beard,
And your designing wicked rump close shaved,
To pass yourself upon us for a eunuch?
And who's this other? Sure enough it's Strato!

HER. Silence there! Keep your seats!
The Senate have invited the King's Eye
To feast with them in the Prytaneum.

DIC. There
An't it enough to drive one mad? to drive one

To hang himself? to be kept here in attendance,
Working myself into a strangury:
Whilst every door flies open to these fellows.
But I'll do something desperate and decided.
Where is Amphitheus got to?

AMP. Here am I.

DIC. There—Take you these eight drachmas on my part,
And make a separate peace for me with Sparta
For me, my wife and children and maidservant
And you—Go on with your embassies and fooleries.

HER. Theorus, our ambassador into Thrace,
Returned from King Sitalces!*

THEO. Here am I.

DIC. More coxcombs called for! Here's another coming.

THEO. We should not have remained so long in Thrace . . . .

DIC. If you hadn't been overpaid I know you wouldn't.

THEO. But for the snow, which covered all the country,
And buried up the roads, and froze the rivers.
'Twas singular this change of weather happened
Just when Theognis here, our frosty poet,
Brought out his tragedy. We passed our time
In drinking with Sitalces. He's your friend,
Your friend and lover, if there ever was one,
And writes the name of Athens on his walls.†
His son, your new-made fellow citizen,
Had wished to have been enrolled in proper form
At the Apaturian festival; and meanwhile,
During his absence, earnestly desires

* Theorus is noted in the "Wasps" as a flattering, super-civil, parasitical person. See his efforts at reconciliation in the next page.

† The common practice of lovers both in ancient and modern times; but in this instance there is probably an allusion to some public monuments which recorded the king's alliance with the Athenians in terms flattering to their national vanity.

That the Apaturian sausages may be sent to him.
He is urgent with his father to befriend
His newly adopted countrymen; and in fine
Sitalces has been so far worked upon,
He has sworn at last his solemn Thracian oath,
Standing before the sacrifice, to send
Such an army, he said, that all the Athenian people
Shall think that there's a flight of locusts coming.

DIC. Then hang me if I believe a word about it,
Except their being locusts; that seems likely.

THEO. And now he has sent some warriors from a tribe
The fiercest in all Thrace.

DIC. Well, come—That's fair.

HER. The Thracians that came hither with Theorus!
Let them come forward!

DIC. What the plague are these?

THEO. The Odomantian army.

DIC. The Odomantians?
Thracians? and what has brought them here from Thrace
So strangely equipt, disguised, and circumcised?

THEO. These are a race of fellows, if you'd hire 'em,
Only at a couple of drachmas daily pay;
With their light javelins, and their little bucklers,
They'd worry and skirmish over all Bœotia.

DIC. Two drachmas for those scarecrows! and our seamen
What would they say to it?—left in arrears,
Poor fellows, that are our support and safeguard.
Out, out upon it! I'm a plundered man.
I'm robbed and ruined here with the Odomantians.
They're seizing upon my garlic.

THEO. [*to the* THRACIANS] Oh, for shame,
Let the man's garlic alone. You shabby fellow,
You countryman, take care what you're about;
Don't venture near them when they're primed with garlic.

DIC. You magistrates, have you the face to see it,
With your own eyes—your fellow-citizen
Here, in the city itself, robbed by barbarians?
But I forbid the Assembly. There's a change
In the heaven! I felt a drop of rain! I'm witness!

HER. The Thracians must withdraw, to attend again
The first of next month. The Assembly is closed.

DIC. Lord help me, what a luncheon have I lost!
But there's Amphitheus coming back from Sparta.
Welcome Amphitheus!

AMP. I'm not welcome yet,
There are the Acharnians pursuing me!

DIC. How so?

AMP. I was coming here to bring the treaties,
But a parcel of old Acharnians smelt me out,
Case-hardened, old, inveterate, hard-handed
Veterans of Marathon, hearts of oak and iron,
Slingers and smiters. They bawled out and bellowed:
"You dog, you villain! now the vines are ruined.
You're come with treaties, are you?" Then they stopped,
Huddling up handfuls of great slinging stones
In the lappets of their cloaks, and I ran off,
And they came driving after me pell-mell,
Roaring and shouting.

DIC. Aye, why let them roar!
You've brought the treaties?

AMP. Aye, three samples of 'em:
This here is a five years' growth, taste it and try.

DIC. Don't like it!

AMP. Eh?

DIC. Don't like it; it won't do;
There's an uncommon ugly twang of pitch,
A touch of naval armament about it.

AMP. Well, here's a ten years' growth, may suit you better.

DIC. No, neither of them. There's a sort of sourness
Here in this last, a taste of acid embassies,
And vapid allies turning to vinegar.

AMP. But here's a truce of thirty years entire,
Warranted sound.

DIC. O Bacchus and the Bacchanals!
This is your sort! here's nectar and ambrosia!
Here's nothing about providing three days' rations;
It says, "Do what you please, go where you will."
I choose it, and adopt it, and embrace it,
For sacrifice and for my private drinking.
In spite of all the Acharnians, I'm determined
To remove out of the reach of wars and mischief,
And keep the feast of Bacchus in my farm.

AMP. And I'll run off to escape from those Acharnians.

Masses of men, when in a state of excitement, whatever may be their collective character or purpose, are apt to separate into two divisions; those of a milder and more reasonable temper taking the one side, and the more ardent and intractable taking the other. This is exemplified in two Semichoruses. The first are upon the point of abandoning their pursuit, while the second persevere in it with unabated eagerness, indefatigable and (as they afterwards show themselves) implacable. The first, on the contrary, are by degrees pacified and induced to listen to reason.

This difference of feeling finally produces a struggle between them, in which those who are of "milder mood" obtain the advantage; and their opponents are obliged to call for assistance from Lamachus, a romantic, enthusiastic military character, and, of course, as decided an advocate for war as Dicæopolis (the poet's dramatic representative) is for peace. Lamachus appears in his gorgeous armour. Dicæopolis, under the affectation of extreme terror and simplicity, contrives to banter and provoke him. Lamachus proceeds to violence, and is foiled; after which a dispute is carried on for some time between them upon equal terms; and they finally separate with a declaration of their respective determinations; the one looking forward to military achievement, and the other to commercial profit and enjoyment.

It may be necessary to say something of an attempt that has been made in the translation of the following Chorus to convey to the

English reader some notion of the metrical character of the original. The poet himself has described the metre as bold and manly, expressive of firmness and vehemence, and, as such, suitable to the persons of whom his Chorus is composed. The Cretic metre (for that is its name) consists of a quaver between two crotchets (— ⏑ —), and may be considered as a truncated form of the Trochaic, differing from it only by the subtraction of a short or quaver-syllable; the Trochaic itself consisting of four syllables, a crotchet and quaver alternately (— ⏑ — ⏑). In consequence of this affinity, we find that the two metres frequently pass into each other.

In the instance before us, the Chorus begins with the Trochaic, but after the first four lines passes into the Cretic; the second Cretic line exhibits a variety of frequent occurrence in the Greek, the last crotchet being resolved into two quavers (— ⏑ ⏑ ⏑). Moreover, the altercation between Dicæopolis and the Chorus is kept up for some time in Trochaics and Cretics alternately.

CHORUS.

Follow faster! all together! search, inquire of every one.
Speak, inform us, have you seen him? Whither is the rascal run?
'Tis a point of public service that the traitor should be caught
In the fact, seized and arrested with the treaties that he brought.

SEMICHORUS I.

He's escaped, he's escaped—
Out upon it! Out upon it!—
Out of sight, out of search.
O the sad wearisome
Load of years!
Well do I remember such a burden as I bore
Running with Phayllus* with a hamper at my back,
Out alack,
Years ago.

---

* An eminent conqueror in the foot-race at Olympia. There was probably some story of his having been matched (under certain disadvantages) against an active man who had been used to run under a burden.

But, alas, my sixty winters and my sad rheumatic pain
Break my speed and spoil my running,—and that old unlucky sprain.
He's escaped—

SEMICHORUS II.

But we'll pursue him. Whether we be fast or slow,
He shall learn to dread the peril of an old Acharnian foe.
O Supreme Powers above,
Merciful Father Jove,
Oh, the vile miscreant wretch;
How did he dare,
How did he presume in his unutterable villany to make a peace,
Peace with the detestable, abominable Spartan race.
No, the war must not end—
Never end—till the whole Spartan tribe
Are reduced, trampled down,
Tied and bound, hand and foot.

CHOR. Now we must renew the search, pursuing at a steady pace.
Soon or late we shall secure him, hunted down from place to place.
Look about like eager marksmen, ready with your slings and stones.
How I long to fall upon him, the villain, and to smash his bones!

Enter DICÆOPOLIS, *his* WIFE *and* DAUGHTER, *a* SLAVE, *&c.*

DIC. Peace, Peace.
Silence, Silence.

CHOR. Stand aside! Keep out of sight! List to the sacrificial cries!
There he comes, the very fellow, going out to sacrifice.

Wait and watch him for a minute, we shall have him by
surprise.

DIC. Silence! move forward, the Canephora;
You, Xanthias, follow close behind her there,
In a proper manner, with your pole and emblem.

WIFE. Set down the basket, daughter, and begin
The ceremony.

DAUGHTER. Give me the cruet, mother,
And let me pour it upon the holy cake.

DIC. Oh, blessed Bacchus, what a joy it is
To go thus unmolested, undisturbed,
My wife, my children, and my family,
With our accustomed joyful ceremony,
To celebrate thy festival in my farm.
Well, here's success to the truce of thirty years.

WIFE. Mind your behaviour, child; carry the basket
In a modest proper manner; look demure
And grave; a happy fellow will he be
That gives more than an eye to ye.—Come, move on.
Mind your gold trinkets, they'll be stolen else.

DIC. Follow behind there, Xanthias, with the pole,
And I'll strike up the bacchanalian chant.
Wife, you must be spectator; go within,
And mount to the housetop to behold us pass.

DIC. [*Sings*]
Leader of the revel rout,
Of the drunken roar and shout,
Crazy mirth and saucy jesting,
Frolic and intrigue clandestine!
Half a dozen years are passed,*
Here we meet in peace at last.

* This comedy was produced in 425 B.C., the sixth year of the Peloponnesian war.

All my wars and fights are o'er:
Other battles please me more,
  With my neighbour's maid, the Thracian,
Found marauding in the wood:
Seizing on the fair occasion,
  With a quick retaliation
Making an immediate booty
Of her innocence and beauty.
If a drunken head should ache,
Bones and heads we never break.
If we quarrel overnight;
At a full carousing soak,
In the morning all is right;
And the shield hung out of sight
In the chimney smoke.

CHOR. That's the man. Mind your aim;
Pelt away—Pelt away.

DIC. Heaven and Earth! what's here to do? You'll break the pitcher, have a care!

CHOR. We'll break your head,
We'll break your bones,
We'll pummel you to death with stones.

DIC. Tell me, most serene Acharnians, wherefore, upon what pretence?

CHOR. Impudence! Insolence!
Infamous traitor, do ye dare to ask?
In despite
Of duty and right,—
Duty to the state,
Duty to the laws,—
You've presumed to separate
Your private cause,
With the villainous abuse
Of a treasonable truce.

And you dare,
Standing there,
Void of shame, void of grace,
To look us in the face.

DIC. But my motive—Once again, let me be heard, and I'll explain.

CHOR. No reply. You shall die,
Stoned and buried all at once,
Buried in a heap of stones.

DIC. Have patience, do ! forbear a bit !
You've never heard my reasons yet.

CHOR. We've forborne, long enough ;
Say no more. Trash and stuff !
We detest you worse than Cleon, him that, if he gets his dues,
We shall cut up into thongs to serve the knights for straps and shoes.
We'll not hear ye ; your alliance with the worst of enemies,
With the wicked hated Spartans, we'll avenge it and chastise.

DIC. Don't be talking of the Spartans ; 'tis another question wholly,
All my guilt or innocence depends upon the treaty solely.

CHOR. Don't imagine to cajole us with your arguments and fetches ;
You confess you made a peace with those abominable wretches.

DIC. Well, the very Spartans even,—I've my doubts and scruples whether
They've been totally to blame, in ev'ry instance, altogether.

CHOR. Not to blame in every instance ! Villain, vagabond, how dare ye,
Talking treason to our faces, to suppose that we should spare ye.

DIC. Not so totally to blame ; and I would show that, here and there,

The treatment they received from us has not been absolutely fair.

CHOR. What a scandal! what an insult! what an outrage on the state!

Are ye come to plead before us as the Spartans' advocate?

DIC. I'm prepared to plead the cause, and bring my neck here for a pledge,

Placed upon the chopping-block, ready to meet the axe's edge.

CHOR. Don't be standing shilly-shally, comrades, let the traitor die.

Pummel him with stones to pieces, pound and maul him utterly,

Mash the villain to a jelly, like a vat of purple dye.

DIC. I'm astonished at your temper. Won't you give me leave to say

Something in my own defence, my good Acharnians? Hear me, pray!

CHOR. We're determined not to hear ye.

DIC. That will be severe indeed.

CHOR. We're determined.

DIC. Good Acharnians, give me time and hear me plead.

CHOR. Death awaits you, death this instant.

DIC. Then the quick resolve is taken.

Know that I've secured a hostage destined to redeem my bacon.*

He, your homebred kindly kinsman, he with me shall live or perish.

CHOR. What's the matter? Is there any child or infant that you cherish,

Missing here amongst you, neighbours, whom he keeps confined in durance?

* The extravagant burlesque which follows, turns upon the occupation of the Acharnians as charcoal-burners.

What can else inspire the man with such a confident assurance?

DIC. Strike, destroy me then, while I shall act in turn the assassin's part,
If the native love of charcoal moves not your obdurate heart.

[DICÆOPOLIS *discovers a hamper of charcoal, and stands over it in a menacing theatrical attitude, with a sword drawn.*]

CHOR. O forbear! see there!
See the poor natural Acharnian hamper of our own,
Ready to be overthrown.
Spare it, I beseech thee, spare.*

DIC. I'll not hear; the word is passed. Poor thing, this instant is its last.

CHOR. Spare it as our only joy,
Our solace and employ,
The staff of our declining years.

DIC. You, when I besought a hearing, armed your hands and shut your ears.

CHOR. Yes, but now we'll permit,
We'll dispense, we'll allow
Your defence.
Our beloved
Darling is at stake.
We submit
Wholly for his sake.

---

* A burlesque of some scene in a contemporary tragedy in which the actors were "brought to a dead-lock." It should seem as if in the original here parodied, the assailants had been kept at bay by the counter-menace of destroying some royal infant in a cradle, which suggested the substitute of a hamper of charcoal. In one of the existing tragedies of Euripides there is an instance of a dead-lock quite as decided as the one which seems to be parodied here.

Dic. Before we parley or compound, cast me those pebbles to the ground.

Chor. See there, all's fair.
But keep your word, sheath the sword.

Dic. Other pebbles may be lurking in the lappets of your jerkin.

Chor. Never fear, never doubt;
See them here shaken out.
There's none behind: only mind,
Keep your word, sheath the sword.
And here I fling stone and sling,
Sling and stone, both away,
Both in one; both are gone.

Dic. Well now, will you please to have done with your noise and nonsense,
And fling them away, too, both. Fine work you've made,
A pretty business! Look there at your hamper.
What a taking the poor creature has been in,
Voiding its coal-dust, like a cuttle fish,
For very fright; nearly destroyed, in short,
Merely from a want of temper and discretion
On the part of its own friends.* 'Tis passing strange,
That human nature should be so possessed
With a propensity to pelt and bawl;
When gentle easy Reason might decide
All their debates with order, peace, and law;
When I myself stand here resigned, and ready
To plead my cause before a chopping-block,
To vindicate the Spartans and myself.
Yet I, forsooth, can feel the fear of death,
And hold my life as dear as others do.

Chor. Bring the block! Bring it here!
Rogue, for I long to hear

* Parody of the rhetorical style of Euripides.

Speedily whatever you can have to say.
Speak away.

SEMICHORUS.

'Twas your own choice, your own appointed pledge.
Bring forth the chopping-block, and speak away.
DIC. Well, there it is. See, there's the chopping-block!
And little I myself am the defendant.
Depend upon it, I'll fight manfully.
I'll never hug myself within my shield;
I'll speak my mind, moreover, about the Spartans.
And yet forsooth a secret anxious fear
Appals me; for I know the turn and temper
Of rustic natures, then delighted most
When from some bold declaimer, right or wrong,
They hear their country's praises and their own;
Delighted, but deluded all the while,
Unconsciously bamboozled and befooled.
And well I know the minds of aged men,
And the malignant pleasure that they feel
In a harsh verdict or an angry vote.
And well I recollect my sufferings past
From Cleon, for my comedy last year;*
And how he dragged me to the senate house,
And trod me down, and bellowed over me,
And licked me with the rough side of his tongue;
And mauled me, till I scarce escaped alive,
All battered and bespattered and befouled.
Permit me, therefore, first to clothe myself
In a pathetical and heartrending dress.
CHOR. It's no use! mere excuse!
Mere pretence!
Take what you will for your defence,

* The Babylonians.

Anything you think of use,
Even the invisible huge hobgoblin helmet
Of the learned Hieronymus,* if you choose.
I care not, I;
You may try
The tricks and turns of Sisyphus in the play; †
We grant free leave for all, but no delay.

DIC. Well, I must try then to keep up my spirits,
And trudge away to find Euripides.
Holloh!

SERVANT. Who's there?

DIC. Euripides within?

SERV. Within, yet not within. You comprehend me?

DIC. Within and not within! why, what do ye mean?

SERV. I speak correctly, old sire! his outward man
Is in the garret writing tragedy;
While his essential being is abroad,
Pursuing whimsies in the world of fancy.

DIC. O happy Euripides, with such a servant;
So clever and accomplished!—call him out.

SERV. It's quite impossible.

DIC. But it must be done.
Positively and absolutely I must see him;
Or I must stand here, rapping at the door.
Euripides! Euripides! come down,
If ever you came down in all your life!
'Tis I, 'tis Dicæopolis from Chollidæ.‡

EUR. I'm not at leisure to come down.

DIC. Perhaps—
But here's the scene-shifter can wheel you round.

* A lyrical and tragic poet particularly studious of the terrific.

† This play is lost, but Sisyphus had been represented in old poetic legends as so artful a person, that he had persuaded Proserpine to consent to his release from the infernal regions.

‡ A mark of rustieity. Dicæopolis mentions his demus in addition to his name.

EUR. It cannot be.
DIC. But however, notwithstanding.
EUR. Well, there then I'm wheeled round; for I had not time
For coming down.
DIC. Euripides, I say!
EUR. What say ye?
DIC. Euripides! Euripides!
Good lawk, you're there! upstairs! you write upstairs,
Instead of the ground-floor? always upstairs.
Well now, that's odd! But, dear Euripides,
If you had but a suit of rags that you could lend me.
You're he that brings out cripples in your tragedies;
A'nt ye? You're the new poet, he that writes
Those characters of beggars and blind people.
Well, dear Euripides, if you could but lend me
A suit of tatters from a cast-off tragedy.
For mercy's sake, for I'm obliged to make
A speech in my own defence before the Chorus,
A long pathetic speech this very day;
And if it fails, the doom of death betides me.
EUR. Say, what do ye seek? is it the woeful garb
In which the wretched aged Œneus acted?
DIC. No, 'twas a wretcheder man than Œneus, much.*
EUR. Was it blind Phœnix?
DIC. No, not Phœnix, no,
A fellow a great deal wretcheder than Phœnix.
EUR. I wonder what he wants; is it the rags
Which Philoctetes went a begging with?
DIC. No, 'twas a beggar worse than Philoctetes.
EUR. Say, would you wish to wear those loathly weeds,
The habiliments of lame Bellerophon?

* This and the names which follow refer to personages in those dramas of Euripides in which his object had been (what in poetry, as in real life, is the meanest of all), to excite compassion.

DIC. 'Twas not Bellerophon, but very like him.
A kind of a smooth, fine spoken character;
A beggar into the bargain and a cripple,
With a grand command of words, bothering and begging.
EUR. I know your man; 'tis Telephus the Mysian.
DIC. Ah, Telephus! Yes, Telephus! do, pray,
Give me the things he wore.
EUR. Go fetch them there.
You'll find 'em next to the tatters of Thyestes,
Just over Ino's. Take them, there, and welcome.
DIC. O Jupiter, what an infinite endless mass
Of eternal holes and patches! Here it is,
Here's wherewithal to clothe myself in misery.
Euripides, now, since you've gone so far,
Do give me the other articles besides
Belonging to these rags, that suit with them,
With a little Mysian bonnet for my head.
For I must wear a beggar's garb to-day,
Yet be myself in spite of my disguise;
That the audience all may know me; but the Chorus,
Poor creatures, must not have the least suspicion
Whilst I cajole them with my rhetoric.
EUR. I'll give it you; your scheme is excellent,
Deep, subtle, natural, a profound device.
DIC. "May the heavens reward you; and as to Telephus,*
May they decide his destiny as I wish!"
Why, bless me, I'm quite inspired (I think) with phrases.
I shall want the beggar's staff, though, notwithstanding.
EUR. Here, take it, and depart forth from the palace.
DIC. O my poor heart! much hardship hast thou borne,
And must abide new sorrows even now,

* In the play which is here burlesqued, Telephus had been speaking in an assumed character, and had appeared, with a similar ambiguous form, to be imprecating evil upon himself.

Driven hence in want of various articles.
Subdue thy nature to necessity,
Be supple, smooth, importunate, and bend
Thy temper to the level of thy fortune.—
Yet grant me another boon, Euripides;
A little tiny basket let it be,
One that has held a lamp, all burnt and battered.

EUR. Why should you need it?

DIC. 'Tis no need, perhaps,
But strong desire, a longing, eager wish.

EUR. You're troublesome. Depart.

DIC. Alas, alas!
Yet may you prosper like your noble mother.*

EUR. Depart, I say.

DIC. Don't say so! Give me first,
First give me a pipkin broken at the brim.

EUR. You're troublesome in the mansion. Take it, go!

DIC. Alas, you know not what I feel, Euripides.
Yet grant me a pitcher, good Euripides;
A pitcher with a sponge plugged in its mouth.

EUR. Fellow, you'll plunder me a whole tragedy.
Take it, and go.

DIC. Yes; aye forsooth, I'm going.
But how shall I contrive? There's something more
That makes or mars my fortune utterly;
Yet give them, and bid me go, my dear Euripides;
A little bundle of leaves to line my basket.

EUR. For mercy's sake! . . . . But take them. There they go!
My tragedies and all! ruined and robbed!

DIC. No more; I mean to trouble you no more.
Yes, I retire; in truth I feel myself
Importunate, intruding on the presence

---

* His mother was of very low condition.

Of chiefs and princes, odious and unwelcome.
But out, alas, that I should so forget
The very point on which my fortune turns;
I wish I may be hanged, my dear Euripides,
If ever I trouble you for anything,
Except one little, little, little boon,
A single lettuce from your mother's stall.

EUR. This stranger taunts us. Close the palace gate.

DIC. O my poor soul, endure it and depart,
And take thy sorrowful leave, without a lettuce.
Yet, knowest thou yet the race which must be run,
Pleading the cause of Sparta: and here you stand
Even at the goal; time urges, arm yourself!
Infuse the spirit of Euripides,
His quirks and quibbles, in thine inmost heart!
'Tis well. Now forward, even to the place
Where thou must pledge thy life, and plead the cause
As may befall thee. Forward, forward yet;
A little more. I'm dreadfully out of spirits.

SEMICHORUS II.*

Speak, or are ye dumb,
Thou rogue in grain,
Iron brain!
Heart of stone!
Villain, are ye come,
Venturing your head alone,
Singly to support a treason of your own.

SEMICHORUS I.

He's resolved,
Confident,
Firm in his intent,

* See p. 23, for the characters of the two Semichoruses.

Ready to the day.
--Well, my man!
Since that's your plan,
Speak away!

[*In the following lines there is an intentional i*
tation of the dry drawling style of EURIPI
harangues.]

DIC. Be not surprised, most excellent spectators,
If I that am a beggar, have presumed
To claim an audience upon public matters,
Even in a comedy; for comedy
Is conversant in all the rules of justice,
And can distinguish betwixt right and wrong.
The words I speak are bold, but just and true.
Cleon, at least, cannot accuse me now,
That I defame the city before strangers.
For this is the Lenæan festival,
And here we meet, all by ourselves alone;
No deputies are arrived as yet with tribute,
No strangers or allies; but here we sit
A chosen sample, clean as sifted corn,
With our own denizens as a kind of chaff.
First, I detest the Spartans most extremely;
And wish, that Neptune, the Tænarian deity,
Would bury them in their houses with his earthquakes
For I've had losses—losses, let me tell ye,
Like other people; vines cut down and injured.
But, among friends (for only friends are here),
Why should we blame the Spartans for all this?
For people of ours, some people of our own,
Some people from amongst us here, I mean;
But not the people (pray remember that);
I never said the people—but a pack
Of paltry people, mere pretended citizens,
Base counterfeits, went laying informations,

And making a confiscation of the jerkins
Imported here from Megara; pigs moreover,
Pumpkins, and pecks of salt, and ropes of onions,
Were voted to be merchandise from Megara,
Denounced, and seized, and sold upon the spot.
Well, these might pass, as petty local matters.
But now, behold, some doughty drunken youths
Kidnap, and carry away from Megara,
The courtesan Simætha. Those of Megara,
In hot retaliation, seize a brace
Of equal strumpets, hurried force perforce
From Dame Aspasia's house of recreation.
So this was the beginning of the war,
All over Greece, owing to these three strumpets.
For Pericles, like an Olympian Jove,
With all his thunder and his thunderbolts,
Began to storm and lighten dreadfully,
Alarming all the neighbourhood of Greece;
And made decrees, drawn up like drinking songs,
In which it was enacted and concluded,
That the Megarians should remain excluded
From every place where commerce was transacted,
With all their ware—like "old care"—in the ballad:
And this decree, by land and sea, was valid.*
Then the Megarians, being all half starved,
Desired the Spartans, to desire of us,
Just to repeal those laws; the laws I mentioned,
Occasioned by the stealing of those strumpets.
And so they begged and prayed us several times;
And we refused; and so they went to war.
You'll say, "They should not." Why, what should they
have done?

---

* The rhymes in the text are intentional. The Scholiast tells us that the original contains an allusion to the words of a well-known drinking song.

DIC. Now clasp your hands across my forehead,
For I feel that I shall strain in vomiting.
Those crests turned me so sick!

LAM. What are you doing?
You varlet, would you use my plume for a vomit?

DIC. A plume, do you call it? What does it belong t

LAM. To a bird—

DIC. To a cock lorrel, does it not?

LAM. Ah, you shall die. [*A scuffle, in which* LAMACH *is foiled.*]

DIC. No, Lamachus, not so fast
That's rather a point above you, stout as you are.

LAM. Is this the sort of language for a beggar
To use to a commander such as me?

DIC. A beggar am I?

LAM. Why, what else are you?

DIC. I'll tell ye! an honest man; that's what I am.
A citizen that has served his time in the army,
As a foot soldier, fairly; not like you,
Pilfering, and drawing pay, with a pack of foreigners.

LAM. They voted me a command.

DIC. Who voted it?
A parcel of cuckoos! Well, I've made my peace.
In short, I could not abide the thing, not I;
To see grey-headed men serve in the ranks,
And lads like you despatched upon commissions;
Some skulking away to Thrace, with their three drachma
Tisamenus's, Chares's, and Geres's,
Cheats, coxcombs, vagabonds, and Phænippus's,
And Theodorus's sent off to Gela,*
And Catana, and Camarina, and the Catamountains.

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* The Scholiast mentions all these persons as disreputable intrig
The Athenians were already extending their views to Sicily.

LAM. It passed by a vote.

DIC. But what's the reason, pray,
For you to be sent out with salaries always,
And none of these good people? You, Marilades,*
Have you been ever sent on an embassy?
You're old enough. He shakes his head. Not he!
Yet he's a hard-working steady sober man.
And you, Euphorides, Prinides,* and the rest,
Have you ever been out into Chaonia,
Or up to Ecbatana?—no, not one of ye.
But Megacles, and Lamachus, and such like,
That, with their debts and payments long since due,†
Have heard their friends insisting and repeating,
"Get off,"—"Keep out of the way;" like the huswife's warning,
That empties a nuisance into the street at night.

LAM. And must we bear all this,—in the name of democracy?

DIC. Yes, just as long as Lamachus draws his salary.

LAM. No matter! Henceforth I devote myself
Against the Peloponnesians, whilst I live,
To assault and harass them by land and sea.

DIC. And I proclaim for all the Peloponnesians
And Thebans and Megarians, a free market;
Where they may trade with me, but not with Lamachus.

The Parabasis, in which the Chorus was brought forward to speak in praise or defence of the author, was a portion of the *primitive* satirical undramatic comedy. In the times of the *ancient* or (as we should call it, from the name of the only author whose remains have reached us) the Aristophanic comedy, it seems to have been regarded as nearly superfluous; and is seldom introduced without some alleged motive, as in the instance before us; sometimes a burlesque one, as in "The Peace."

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* Names allusive to their occupation as charcoal-burners.

† Monthly payments to their club.

The present, which is the oldest of the existing plays of Aristophanes, was, as he tells us, the first in which he had introduced a Parabasis. Since his alleged, and probably his real, motive was the circumstance to which he had already alluded when speaking in the assumed character of Dicæopolis, he had reverted to his

"sufferings past
From Cleon, for my comedy last year" (p. 32).

This comedy ("The Babylonians") seems, as far as we can judge of it from the few fragments that remain, to have been intended, in the first place, as an exposure of existing malpractices and abuses, and, secondly, as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the extravagant schemes of Athenian ambition; assuming them to be realized, and exhibiting the result.

The progressive aggrandizement of Athens had been marked, from the beginning, by the extortion and oppression practised (with a few honourable exceptions) by her military commanders; Themistocles himself having set the first example. In process of time, as the inferior allied States became gradually subject to the more immediate dominion of Athens, they became exposed to the additional pest of professional informers and venal demagogues, subsisting or enriching themselves by extortion and bribery. This state of things, odious and offensive to the whole Grecian race, disgraceful to the Athenian people, and profitable only to the most worthless and unprincipled among them, was the final unsatisfactory result of their vast efforts and indefatigable activity during two generations, the consummation of the ambitious projects of the most able statesmen of a former age. Meanwhile, at the time when this play ("The Babylonians") was produced, the same scandals and abuses continued to be perpetrated in the subject States, under the cover of the Athenian supremacy; while the avidity for further conquest and dominion still remained predominant in the minds of the Athenian people.

The poet then, in the fervour of youthful patriotism and the pride of conscious genius; not as he was soon afterwards tempted to become and to constitute himself, a professional playwright, the poetical serf of the community;* but with the option of active life still open before him, comparatively therefore independent of his audience, and confident in his own wit and courage as a defence against the resentment of the most powerful opponents; had ventured an appeal to the Athenian people against their whole system of imperial policy both internal and external, against the grievances

* These inferences are distinctly deducible from the Parabasis of "The Knights."

which they authorized or overlooked, and against their insatiable avidity for empire, tending, if attainable, in its unavoidable results, to the wider extension and aggravation of a system of abuses disgraceful to the name and character of the Athenian people.

With this view therefore, taking for his canvas an imaginary empire, extending to the furthest limits to which the wildest ambition of his countrymen would have aspired, he had transferred to its remote localities the practices of the most notorious Athenian characters, and the most flagrant instances of existing oppression and corruption. The demagogues and informers of Athens (under this supposed unlimited extension of Athenian supremacy) were represented as transacting business on a larger scale, and extending to the richest and most distant regions of the East the practices which had hitherto been limited to the islands of the Archipelago and the shores of Asia Minor.

The poet, however, must have been aware that he had undertaken a task of extreme difficulty and hazard; one in which, more than in any other theatrical attempt, it was necessary for him, at the first outset, to secure the sympathy of his audience; or, more properly speaking, to excite an antipathy against the objects of his attack, similar to that by which he himself was animated. It seems probable, therefore, that the order of subjects in the comedy must have been the same as that which is observable in the Parabasis which follows, and which may be considered as an apologetical analysis of the preceding play. It had begun then with the least criminal perhaps, but to the feelings of the Athenians the most invidious and irritating topic of accusation—namely, the occasional instances of undue advantages obtained for a subject State, by the hired agency of Athenian statesmen and orators, co-operating with the panegyrical cajolery of its deputies and envoys. A fragment has been preserved, evidently belonging to what was called a "long rhesis," a narrative speech, in which a character of this kind is making a triumphant report to his employers; describing his success in captivating the attention of an Athenian auditory, and giving a ridiculous picture of the effect which his oratory had produced upon them.

> Then every soul of them sat open-mouth'd,
> Like roasted oysters, gaping in a row.*

But the general plan of the play must have included a picture of the abuses and insolence under which the subject States were suffering; an exhibition of the processes of extortion and intimidation which

* Ap. Athen. p. 86. Compare this with "Knights," v. 651, and the whole passage to which it belongs.

were practised upon them; an exposure of the persons most notoriously guilty of such practices, and probably also of some flagrant instances which were known to have occurred, and which might have been represented on the stage with no other disguise than that of a remote fanciful locality assigned to them in the new imaginary universal Empire of the Athenian Commonwealth.

This must have been the service, which, as he says, had excited the grateful feelings of the subject States, and their just admiration of the courage of the man "who had risked the perilous enterprise of pleading in behalf of justice, in presence of an Athenian auditory." It is observable that the poet, after having, with a just feeling of pride and self-estimation, ventured in this way to assert his own merits, immediately after, as if alarmed at his own boldness (like Rabelais or the jesters in Shakespeare, when they are apprehensive of having touched upon too tender a point) makes a sudden escape from the subject, and hurries off into a strain of transcendental nonsense, about the high consideration with which his character and services to the country were regarded by the Persian monarch, and how the Spartans insisted upon obtaining the island of Ægina, from no other motive than a wish to deprive the Athenians of the advantage which they might derive from his poetical admonitions.

PARABASIS OF THE CHORUS.

Our poet has never as yet
Esteemed it proper or fit,
To detain you with a long
Encomiastic song,
On his own superior wit.
But being abused and accused,
And attacked of late,
As a foe to the State,
He makes an appeal in his proper defence
To your voluble humour and temper and sense,
With the following plea;
Namely, that he
Never attempted or ever meant
To scandalize
In any wise

Your mighty imperial government.
Moreover he says,
That in various ways
He presumes to have merited honour and praise,
Exhorting you still to stick to your rights,
And no more to be fooled with rhetorical flights;
Such as of late each envoy tries
On the behalf of your allies,
That come to plead their cause before ye,
With fulsome phrase, and a foolish story
Of *violet crowns* and *Athenian glory;*
With *sumptuous Athens* at every word;
Sumptuous Athens is always heard,
Sumptuous ever; a suitable phrase
For a dish of meat or a beast at graze.
He therefore affirms,
In confident terms,
That his active courage and earnest zeal
Have usefully served your common weal:
He has openly shown
The style and tone
Of your democracy ruling abroad.
He has placed its practices on record;
The tyrannical arts, the knavish tricks,
That poison all your politics.
Therefore we shall see, this year,
The allies with tribute arriving here,
Eager and anxious all to behold
Their steady protector, the bard so bold:
The bard, they say, that has dared to speak,
To attack the strong, to defend the weak.
His fame in foreign climes is heard,
And a singular instance lately occurred.
It occurred in the case of the Persian king,
Sifting and cross-examining

The Spartan envoys. He demanded
Which of the rival States commanded
The Grecian seas? He asked them next
(Wishing to see them more perplexed),
Which of the two contending powers
Was chiefly abused by this bard of ours?
For he said, "Such a bold, so profound an advis
By dint of abuse would render them wiser,
More active and able; and briefly that they
Must finally prosper and carry the day."
Now mark the Lacedæmonian guile!
Demanding an insignificant isle!
"Ægina," they say, "for a pledge of peace,
As a means to make all jealousy cease."
Meanwhile their privy design and plan
Is solely to gain this marvellous man—
Knowing his influence on your fate—
By obtaining a hold on his estate
Situate in the isle aforesaid.
Therefore there needs to be no more said.
You know their intention, and know that you know it.
You'll keep to your island, and stick to the poet.
And he for his part
Will practise his art
With a patriot heart,
With the honest views
That he now pursues,
And fair buffoonery and abuse;
Not rashly bespattering, or basely beflattering,
Not pimping, or puffing, or acting the ruffian;
Not sneaking or fawning;
But openly scorning
All menace and warning,
All bribes and suborning:
He will do his endeavour on your behalf;

He will teach you to think, he will teach you to laugh.
So Cleon again and again may try;
I value him not, nor fear him, I!
His rage and rhetoric I defy.
His impudence, his politics,
His dirty designs, his rascally tricks
No stain of abuse on me shall fix.
Justice and right, in his despite,
Shall aid and attend me, and do me right:
With these to friend, I ne'er will bend,
Nor descend
To an humble tone
(Like his own),
As a sneaking loon,
A knavish, slavish, poor poltroon.

STROPHE.

Muse of old
Many times,
Strike the bold
Hearty rhymes,
New revived
Firm energetical
Music of Acharnæ;
Choleric, fiery, quick,
As the sparkle
From the charcoal,
Of the native evergreen
Knotted oak,
In the smoke
Shows his active fiery spleen.
Whilst beside
Stands the dish
Full of fish
Ready to be fried:

Every face, in the place,
Overjoyed, all employed,
  Junketing apace.
Muse then, as a friend of all,
Hasten, and attend the call.
Give an ear
  To your old,
  Lusty, bold
Townsman here.

EPIRREMA.

We, the veterans of the city, briefly must expostulate
At the hard ungrateful usage which we meet with from the State,
Suffering men of years and service at your bar to stand indicted,
Bullied by your beardless speakers, worried and perplexed and frighted;
Aided only by their staff, the staff on which their steps are stayed;
Old, and impotent, and empty; deaf, decrepit, and decayed.
There they stand, and pore, and drivel, with a misty purblind gleam,
Scarce discerning the tribunal, in a kind of waking dream.
Then the stripling, their accuser, fresh from training, bold and quick,
Pleads in person, fencing, sparring, using every turn and trick;
Grappling with the feeble culprit, dragging him to dangerous ground,
Into pitfalls of dilemmas, to perplex him and confound.
Then the wretched invalid attempts an answer, and at last,
After stammering and mumbling, goes away condemned and cast;
Moaning to his friends and neighbours, "All the little store I have,

All is gone! my purchase-money for a coffin and my grave."

ANTISTROPHE.

Scandalous and a shame it is,
Seen or told;
Scandalous and a shame to see,
A warrior old;
Crippled in the war,
Worried at the bar;
Him, the veteran, that of old
Firmly stood,
With a fierce and hardy frown,
In the field of Marathon;
Running down
Sweat and blood.
There and then, we were men;
Valorous assailants; now
Poor and low;
Open and exposed to wrong,
From the young;
Every knave, every ass,
Every rogue like Marpsyas.*

The Thucydides mentioned in the following lines is not the historian (the son of Olorus), but a much older man, and in his time of much greater personal eminence. In the scanty historical notices which have reached us respecting the period in which he lived, he is distinguished from others of the same name, as the son of Milesius; and it should seem that he must have succeeded to Cimon, as the leader of an unavailing opposition to that system of innovation in domestic and foreign policy which Pericles introduced, and by which he secured for himself, at the expense of posterity, a life annuity of power and popularity.

A very characteristic anecdote is alluded to in the seventh and eighth lines. Thucydides had been asked "which of the two (himself or

* Not known in history, but said by the Scholiast to have been noted by the contemporary comic poets as a troublesome contentious orator.

Pericles) was the best wrestler,"—*i.e.*, the best debater. To which he answered, "I am the best wrestler; but when I have flung him he starts up again and persuades the people that he was not thrown down."

ANTEPIRREMA.

Shame and grief it was to witness poor Thucydides's fate,
Indicted by Cephisodemus,* overwhelmed with words and prate.
I myself when I beheld him, an old statesman of the city,
Dragged and held by Scythian archers,† I was moved to tears and pity,
Him that I remember once tremendous, terrible, and loud;
Discomfiting the Scythian host, subduing the revolted crowd;
Undaunted, desperate, and bold, that with his hasty grasp could fling
A dozen, in as many casts, of the best wrestlers in the ring.
Three thousand archers of the guard, he bawled and roared and bore them down.
No living soul he feared or spared, or friends or kinsmen of his own.
Since you then refuse to suffer aged men to rest in peace;
Range your criminals in classes, let the present method cease.
Give up elderly delinquents to be mumbled, mouthed, and wrung
By the toothless old accusers; but protect them from the young.

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* An orator famous, or rather infamous, as a bold and dangerous accuser.

† These were purchased slaves, the property of the State, employed by the magistrates as a police guard: see Thesm. v. 1001. They were also employed to maintain order in the public assembly, and to force disorderly speakers to descend from the bema. This part of their duties is alluded to elsewhere: see Eccles. v. 143, 258.

For the younger class of culprits young accusers will be
fair,
Prating prostituted fops, and Clinias's son and heir.
Thus we may proceed in order, all of us, with all our
might,
Severally, both youths and elders, to defend and to indict.

DICÆOPOLIS.

Well, there's the boundary of my market-place,
Marked out, for the Peloponnesians and Bœotians
And the Megarians. All are freely welcome
To traffic and sell with me, but not with Lamachus.
Moreover I've appointed constables,
With lawful and sufficient straps and thongs,
To keep the peace, and to coerce and punish
All spies and vagabonds and informing people.
Come, now for the column, with the terms of peace
Inscribed upon it! I must fetch it out,
And fix it here in the centre of my market. [*Exit.*

A writer in the *Quarterly Review* for July 1820 (not a very different person from the writer of this note) adduces the two scenes immediately following, as instances, amongst others, of that tendency to generalization which, as he contends, was no less predominant in the mind of Aristophanes than in that of Shakespeare.

In reference to this principle it is observed of the following scenes, that "the two country people who are introduced as attending Dicæopolis's market, are not merely a Megarian and a Theban distinguished by a difference of dialect and behaviour; they are the two extremes of rustic character—the one (the Megarian) depressed by indigence into meanness, is shifting and selfish, with habits of coarse fraud and vulgar jocularity. The Theban is the direct opposite—a primitive, hearty, frank, unsuspicious, easy-minded fellow; he comes to market with his followers, in a kind of old-fashioned rustic triumph, with his bag-pipers attending him: Dicæopolis (the Athenian, the medium between the two extremes before described) immediately exhibits his superior refinement, by suppressing their minstrelsy; and the honest Theban, instead of being offended, joins in condemning them. He then displays his wares, and the Athenian, with a bur-

lesque tragical rant, takes one of his best articles (a Copaic eel) and delivers it to his own attendants to be conveyed within doors. The Theban, with great simplicity, asks how he is to be paid for it; and the Athenian, in a tone of grave superiority, but with some awkwardness, informs him that he claims it as a toll due to the market. The Theban does not remonstrate, but after some conversation agrees to dispose of all his wares, and to take other goods in return; but here a difficulty arises, for the same articles which the Athenian proposes in exchange happen to be equally abundant in Bœotia. The scene here passes into burlesque, but it is a burlesque expressive of the character which is assigned to the Theban; a character of primitive simplicity, utterly unacquainted with all the pests by which existence was poisoned in the corrupt community of Athens. A common sycophant or informer is proposed as an article which the Athenian soil produced in great abundance, but which would be considered as a rarity in Bœotia. The Theban agrees to the exchange, saying, that if he could get such an animal to take home, he thinks he could make a handsome profit by exhibiting him."

The scene which immediately follows (that of the Megarian) has been slightly modified, without detriment, it must be hoped, to the genuine humour of the original, perhaps even with advantage; since the attention of the English reader is not distracted by that strange contrast of ancient and modern manners, which strikes the reader of the original with an impression, wholly disproportionate to the intention of the Author, and destructive of that general harmony and breadth of effect which he had intended to produce, and which, as far as his contemporaries were concerned, he had succeeded in producing.

Enter a MEGARIAN *with his two little girls.*

MEG. Ah, there's the Athenian market! Heaven bless it,
I say; the welcomest sight to a Megarian.
I've looked for it, and longed for it, like a child
For its own mother. You, my daughters dear,
Disastrous offspring of a dismal sire,
List to my words; and let them sink impressed
Upon your empty stomachs; now's the time
That you must seek a livelihood for yourselves.
Therefore resolve at once, and answer me;
Will you be sold abroad, or starve at home?

BOTH. Let us be sold, papa! Let us be sold!

MEG. I say so too; but who do ye think will purchase
Such useless mischievous commodities?
However, I have a notion of my own,
A true Megarian* scheme; I mean to sell ye
Disguised as pigs, with artificial pettitoes.
Here, take them, and put them on. Remember now,
Show yourselves off; do credit to your breeding,
Like decent pigs; or else, by Mercury,
If I'm obliged to take you back to Megara,
There you shall starve, far worse than heretofore.
—This pair of masks too—fasten 'em on your faces,
And crawl into the sack there on the ground.
Mind ye—Remember—you must squeak and whine,
And racket about like little roasting pigs.
—And I'll call out for Dicæopolis.
Ho, Dicæopolis, Dicæopolis!
I say, would you please to buy some pigs of mine?

DIC. What's there? a Megarian?

MEG. [*sneakingly*]. Yes—We're come to market.

DIC. How goes it with you?

MEG. We're all like to starve.

DIC. Well, liking is everything. If you have your liking,
That's all in all: the likeness is a good one,
A pretty likeness! like to starve, you say.
But what else are you doing?

MEG. What we're doing?
I left our governing people all contriving
To ruin us utterly without loss of time.

DIC. It's the only way: it will keep you out of mischief,
Meddling and getting into scrapes.

MEG. Aye, yes.

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* The Athenians could not claim the invention of comedy, which belonged to the Megarians: they therefore indemnified themselves by decrying the humour of the Megarians, as low and vulgar.

DIC. Well, what's your other news? How's corn? What price?

MEG. Corn? it's above all price; we worship it.

DIC. But salt? You've salt, I reckon—

MEG. Salt? how should we?
Have not you seized the salt pans?

DIC. No! nor garlic?
Have not ye garlic?

MEG. What do ye talk of garlic?
As if you had not wasted and destroyed it,
And grubbed the very roots out of the ground.

DIC. Well, what have you got then? Tell us! Can't ye!

MEG. [*in the tone of a sturdy resolute lie*]. Pigs—
Pigs truly—pigs forsooth, for sacrifice.

DIC. That's well, let's look at 'em.

MEG. Aye, they're handsome ones;
You may feel how heavy they are, if ye hold 'em up.

DIC. Hey-day! What's this? What's here?

MEG. A pig, to be sure.

DIC. Do ye say so? Where does it come from?

MEG. Come? from Megara.
What, an't it a pig?

DIC. No truly, it does not seem so.

MEG. Did you ever hear the like? Such an unaccountable
Suspicious fellow! it is not a pig, he says!
But I'll be judged; I'll bet ye a bushel of salt,
It's what we call a natural proper pig.

DIC. Perhaps it may, but it's a human pig.

MEG. Human! I'm human; and they're mine, that's all.
Whose should they be, do ye think? so far they're human.
But come, will you hear 'em squeak?

DIC. Aye, yes, by Jove,
With all my heart.

MEG. Come now, pig! now's the time:
Remember what I told ye—squeak directly!
Squeak, can't ye? Curse ye, what's the matter with ye?
Squeak when I bid you, I say; by Mercury
I'll carry you back to Megara if you don't.

DAUGH. Wee wée.

MEG. Do ye hear the pig?

DIC. The pig, do ye call it?
It will be a different creature before long.

MEG. It will take after the mother, like enough.

DIC. Aye, but this pig won't do for sacrifice.

MEG. Why not? Why won't it do for sacrifice?

DIC. Imperfect! here's no tail!

MEG. Poh, never mind;
It will have a tail in time, like all the rest.
But feel this other, just the fellow to it;
With a little further keeping, it would serve
For a pretty dainty sacrifice to Venus.

DIC. You warrant 'em weaned? they'll feed without the mother?

MEG. Without the mother or the father either.

DIC. But what do they like to eat?

MEG. Just what ye give 'em;
You may ask 'em if you will.

DIC. Pig, Pig!

1ST DAUGH. Wee wée.

DIC. Pig, are ye fond of peas?

1ST DAUGH. Wee wée, Wee wée.

DIC. Are ye fond of figs?

1ST DAUGH. Wee wée, Wee wée, Wee wée.

DIC. You little one, are you fond of figs?

2ND DAUGH. Wee wée.

DIC. What a squeak was there! they're ravenous for the figs;
Go somebody, fetch out a parcel of figs

For the little pigs! Heh, what, they'll eat I warrant.
Lawk there, look at 'em racketing and bustling!
How they do munch and crunch! in the name of heaven,
Why, sure they can't have eaten 'em all already!

MEG. [*sneakingly*]. Not all, there's this one here, I too myself.

DIC. Well, faith, they're clever comical animals.
What shall I give you for 'em? What do ye ask?

MEG. I must have a gross of onions for this here;
And the other you may take for a peck of salt.

DIC. I'll keep 'em; wait a moment. [*Exi*

MEG. Heaven be praised
O blessed Mercury, if I could but manage
To make such another bargain for my wife,
I'd do it to-morrow, or my mother either.

Enter INFORMER.

INF. Fellow, from whence?

MEG. From Megara with my pigs

INF. Then I denounce your pigs, and you yourself,
As belonging to the enemy.

MEG. There it is!
The beginning of all our troubles over again.

INF. I'll teach you to come Megarizing here:
Let go of the sack there.

MEG. Dicæopolis!
Ho, Dicæopolis! there's a fellow here
Denouncing me.

DIC. Denouncing is he? Constables,
Why don't you keep the market clear of sycophants?
You fellow, I must inform ye, your informing
Is wholly illegal and informal here.

INF. What, giving informations against the enemy;
Is that prohibited?

DIC. At your peril! Carry
Your information to some other market.

MEG. What a plague it is at Athens, this informing!

DIC. O never fear, Megarian; take it there,
The payment for your pigs, the salt and onions:
And fare you well.

MEG. That's not the fashion amongst us.
We've not been used to faring well.

DIC. No matter.
If it's offensive, I'll revoke the wish;
And imprecate it on myself instead. [*Exit.*

MEG. There now, my little pigs, you must contrive
To munch your bread with salt, if you can get it. [*Exit.*

The following song consists merely of a satirical enumeration and description of persons, now, for the most part, entirely forgotten. An attempt has therefore been made to give some interest to it (an interest of curiosity at least) by a close imitation of the metre of the original. The Cratinus here mentioned is not the celebrated comic author, but a cotemporary lyrical poet, of whom nothing, I believe, is known. The name of Hyperbolus is upon record, as that of a turbulent public speaker and accuser. Cleonymus is noted in this and other comedies (see p. 18, v. 87-8), as a great overgrown coward, and a voracious intrusive guest.

CHORUS.

Our friend's affairs improve apace; his lucky speculation
Is raising him to wealth and place, to name and reputation.
With a revenue neat and clear,
Arising without risk or fear,
No sycophant will venture here
To spoil his occupation.
Not Ctesias, the dirty spy, that lately terrified him;
Nor Prepis, with his infamy, will jostle side beside him:
Clothed in a neat and airy dress,
He'll move at ease among the press,
Without a fear of nastiness,
Or danger to betide him.
Hyperbolus will never dare to indict him nor arrest him.
Cleonymus will not be there to bother and molest him.

Nor he, the bard of little price,
Cratinus, with the curls so nice,
Cratinus in the new device
In which the barber dressed him.
Nor he, the paltry saucy rogue, the poor and undeserving
Lysistratus, that heads the vogue, in impudence unswerving.
Taunt and offence in all he says;
Ruined in all kinds of ways;
In every month of thirty days,
Nine and twenty starving.

Enter a THEBAN *with his attendants, all bearing burdens; followed by a train of bagpipers.*

THEB. Good troth, I'm right down shoulder-galled; my lads,
Set down your bundles. You, take care o' the herbs.
Gently, be sure don't bruise 'em; and now, you minstrels,
That needs would follow us all the way from Thebes;
Blow wind i' the tail of your bagpipes, puff away.

DIC. Get out! what wind has brought 'em here, I wonder?
A parcel of hornets buzzing about the door!
You humble-bumble drones—Get out! Get out!

THEB. As Iolaus shall help me, that's well done,
Friend, and I thank you;—coming out of Thebes,
They blew me away the blossom of all these herbs.
You've sarved 'em right. So now would you please to buy,
What likes you best, of all my chaffer here;
All kinds, four-footed things and feathered fowl,

DIC. [*suddenly, with the common trick of condescension, as if he had not observed him before*].
My little tight Bœotian! Welcome kindly,
My little pudding-eater! What have you brought?

THEB. In a manner, everything, as a body may say;
All the good cheer of Thebes, and the primest wares,

Mats, trefoil, wicks for lamps, sweet marjoram,
Coots, didappers, and water-hens—what not?
Widgeon and teal.

DIC. Why, you're come here amongst us,
Like a north wind in winter, with your wild fowl.

THEB. Moreover I've brought geese, and hares moreover,
And eels from the lake Copais, which is more.

DIC. O thou bestower of the best spichcocks
That ever yet were given to mortal man,
Permit me to salute those charming eels.

THEB. [*addressing the eel, and delivering it to* DICÆOPOLIS].
Daughter, come forth, and greet the courteous stranger,
First-born of fifty damsels of the lake!

DIC. O long regretted and recovered late,
Welcome, thrice welcome to the Comic Choir;
Welcome to me, to Morychus,* and all.
(Ye slaves prepare the chafing dish and stove.)
Children, behold her here, the best of eels,
The loveliest and the best, at length returned
After six years of absence. I myself
Will furnish you with charcoal for her sake.
Salute her with respect, and wait upon
Her entrance there within, with due conveyance.

[*the eel is here carried off by* DICÆOPOLIS'S *servants*].

Grant me, ye gods! so to possess thee still,
While my life lasts, and at my latest hour,
Fresh even and sweet as now, with . . . . savoury sauce.

THEB. But how am I to be paid for it? Won't you tell me?

DIC. Why, with respect to the eel, in the present instance,
I mean to take it as a perquisite,

* At the close of the play, a splendid supper was given by the choregus to the whole Comic Choir; authors, actors, and judges. Morychus was a noted epicure.

As a kind of toll to the market; you understand me.
These other things of course are meant for sale.

THEB. Yes, sure. I sell 'em all.

DIC. Well, what do you ask?
Or would you take commodities in exchange?

THEB. Aye; think of something of your country produce,
That's plentiful down here, and scarce up there.

DIC. Well, you shall take our pilchards or our pottery.

THEB. Pilchards and pottery! Naugh, we've plenty of they.
But think of something, as I said before,
That's plentiful down here, and scarce up there.

DIC. [*after a moment's reflection*].
I have it! A true-bred sycophant and informer.
I'll give you one, tied neatly and corded up,
Like an oil-jar.

THEB. Aye; that's fair; by the holy twins!
He'd bring in money, I warrant, money enough,
Amongst our folks at home, with showing him,
Like a mischief-full kind of a foreign ape.

DIC. Well, there's Nicarchus moving down this way,
Laying his informations. There he comes.

THEB. [*contemplating him with the eye of a purchaser*].
'A seems but a small one to look at.

DIC. Aye, but I promise ye,
He's full of tricks and roguery, every inch of him.

Enter NICARCHUS.

NIC. [*in the pert peremptory tone of his profession as an informer*].
Whose goods are these? these articles?

THEB. Mine, sure;
We be come here from Thebes.

NIC. Then I denounce them
As enemies' property.

THEB. [*with an immediate outcry*]. Why, what harm have they done,
The birds and creatures? Why do you quarrel with 'em?
NIC. And I'll denounce you too.
THEB. What, me? What for?
NIC. To satisfy the bystanders, I'll explain.
You've brought in wicks of lamps from an enemy's country.
DIC. [*ironically*]. And so, you bring 'em to *light?*
NIC. I bring to light
A plot!—a plot to burn the arsenal!
DIC. [*ironically*]. With the wick of a lamp?
NIC. Undoubtedly.
DIC. In what way?
NIC. [*with great gravity*]. A Bœotian might be capable of fixing it
On the back of a cockroach, who might float with it
Into the arsenal, with a north-east wind;
And if once the fire caught hold of a single vessel,
The whole would be in a blaze.
DIC. [*seizing hold of him*]. You dog! You villain!
Would a cockroach burn the ships and the arsenal?
NIC. Bear witness all of ye.
DIC. There, stop his mouth;
And bring me a band of straw to bind him up;
And send him safely away, for fear of damage,
Gently and steadily, like a potter's jar.

The metre of the following song is given as a tolerably near approach to that of the original; in fact, the nearest which has been found consistent with the necessity of rhyme.

CHOR. To preserve him safe and sound,
You must have him fairly bound,
With a cordage nicely wound,
Up and down, and round and round;
Securely packed.

DIC. I shall have a special care,
For he's a piece of paltry ware;
And as you strike him, here—or there—[*striking him*
The noises he returns declare—[*the informer screaming*
He's partly cracked.*

CHOR. How then is he fit for use?
DIC. As a store-jar of abuse.
Plots and lies he cooks and brews,
Slander and seditious news,
Or anything.

CHOR. Have you stowed him safe enough?
DIC. Never fear, he's hearty stuff;
Fit for usage hard and rough,
Fit to beat and fit to cuff,
To toss and fling.
You can hang him up or down,†
By the heels or by the crown.

THEB. I'm for harvest business bown.
CHOR. Fare ye well, my jolly clown.
We wish ye joy.
You've a purchase tight and neat;
A rogue, a sycophant complete;
Fit to bang about and beat,
Fit to stand the cold and heat,
And all employ.

DIC. I'd a hard job with the rascal, tying him up!
Come, my Bœotian, take away your bargain.
THEB. [*speaking to one of his servants*].
Ismenias, stoop your back, and heave him up.
There—softly and fairly—so—now carry him off.
DIC. He's an unlucky commodity; notwithstanding,

* The soundness of an earthen vessel is ascertained by striking a smart blow upon it, and attending to the tone which it gives out.

† The Informer being by this time fairly corded and packed, is flung about and hung up, in confirmation of Dicæopolis's warranty.

If he earns you a profit, you can have to say,
What few can say, you've been the better for him,
And mended your affairs by the informer.

Enter a SLAVE.

SLAVE [*in a loud voice*]. Ho, Dicæopolis!
DIC. Well, what's the matter?
Why need ye bawl so?
SLAVE. Lamachus sends his orders,
With a drachma for a dish of quails, and three
For that Copaic eel, he bid me give you.
DIC. An eel for Lamachus? Who is Lamachus?
SLAVE. The fierce and hardy warrior; he that wields
The Gorgon shield, and waves the triple plume.
DIC. And if he'd give me his shield, he should not have it:
Let him wave his plumage over a mess of salt fish.
What's more; if he takes it amiss, and makes a riot,
I'll speak to the clerk of the market, you may tell him.
But as for me, with this my precious basket,
Hence I depart, while ortolans and quails
Attend my passage and partake the gales. [*Exit.*

CHORUS.

An attempt has been here made to reproduce in English the peculiar metre of the original, in which (after an irregular beginning) each line is made to consist of four Cretic measures, of which it is requisite that the three first should be of the form already described in p. 24 (namely, a crotchet followed by three quavers). The difficulty arising from the great scarcity of short syllables in the English* language, as compared with the Greek, has led to some infractions of this rule, in the unequal length of some of the lines, and the substitution of the common Cretic measure, in its usual unresolved form;† not to mention one or two indefensible but

* The whole of the English Liturgy gives only one instance of five short syllables in succession. In the three first lines of Herodotus we find a succession of six and of five.

† As may be seen in v. 8, 9, 10, and 11.

unavoidable false quantities, together with certain hiatuses and semi-hiatuses, which in a less restricted metre it would not have been difficult to avoid.

EPIRREMA.

O behold, O behold
The serene happy sage,
The profound mighty mind,
Miracle of our age,
Calmly wise, prosperous in enterprise,
Cool, correct, boundless in the compass of his intellect.
Savoury commodities and articles of every kind
Pouring in upon him, and accumulating all around.
Some to be reserved apart, ready for domestic use;
Some again, that require
Quickly to be broiled or roast, hastily devoured and smoused,
On the spot, piping hot.
See there, as a sample of his hospitable elegance,
Feathers and a litter of his offal at the door displayed!
War is my aversion; I detest the very thought of him.
Never in my life will I receive him in my house again;
Positively never; he behaved in such a beastly way.
There we were assembled at a dinner of the neighbourhood.
Mirth and unanimity prevailed till he reversed it all,
Coming in among us of a sudden, in a haughty style.
Civilly we treated him enough, with a polite request:
"Please ye to be seated, and to join us in a fair carouse."
Nothing of the kind! but unaccountably he began to storm,
Brandishing a torch as if he meant to set the house afire,
Swaggering and hectoring, abusing and assaulting us.
First he smashed the jars, he spoilt and spilt the wines;
Next he burnt the stakes, and ruined all the vines.

ANTEPIRREMA.

An endeavour to develop with more effect a pretty fanciful allusion in the original has led to another infraction of the metrical rule above described. It is to be hoped, however, that the passage in question (from v. 7 to 14) will not be found to exhibit any marked departure from the general character which belongs to this peculiar form of the Cretic metre. The picture, the work of Zeuxis, was an object well known to all the inhabitants of Athens; for the sake of the modern reader, it was necessary to insert a slight sketch of it.

Wherefore are ye gone away,
Whither are ye gone astray,
Lovely Peace,
Vanishing, eloping, and abandoning unhappy Greece?
Love is as a painter ever, doting on a fair design.
Zeuxis has illustrated a vision and a wish of mine.
Cupid is portrayed
Naked, unarrayed,
With an amaranthine braid
Waving in his hand;
With a lover and a maid
Bounden in a band.
Cupid is uniting both,
Nothing loth.
Think then if I saw ye with a Cupid in a tether, dear,
Binding and uniting us eternally together here.
Think of the delight of it; in harmony to live at last,
Making it a principle to cancel all offences past.
Really I propose it, and I promise ye to do my best
(Old as you may fancy me), to sacrifice my peace and rest;
Working in my calling as a father of a family,
Labouring and occupied in articles of husbandry.
You shall have an orchard, with the fig-trees in a border round
Planted all in order, and a vineyard and an olive ground.

When the month is ended, we'll repose from toil,
With a bath and banquet, wine and anointing oil.

HERALD, *or* CRIER.

Hear ye! Good people! Hear ye! A Festival—
According to ancient custom—this same day—
The feast of the pitchers—with the prize for drinkers,
To drink at the sound of the trumpet. He that wins
To receive a wine-skin; Ctesiphon's own skin.*

DIC. O slaves! ye boys and women! Heard ye not
The summons of the herald? Hasten forth,
With quick despatch, to boil, to roast, to fry;
Hacking and cutting, plucking, gutting, flaying;
Hashing and slashing, mincing, fricasseeing.
And plait the garlands nimbly; and bring me here
Those, the least skewers of all, to truss the quails.

When Aristophanes cannot make use of his Chorus to sustain an efficient part, he is apt to indemnify himself for the incumbrance they create, by turning the essential characteristics of a Chorus into ridicule. Here then, and at the close of the following scene (that between Dicæopolis and the Countryman), they are represented as time-serving and obsequious; in "The Lysistrata," as dawdling, useless, and silly (v. 319 to 49); and in "The Birds," as exciting the spleen and impatience of the practical active man of business, by their vague speculations and poetical pedantry (1313 to 36). In "The Peace," the absurdity of introducing such a Chorus is kept out of sight by the absurd unmanageable behaviour of the Chorus itself (v. 300).

CHOR. Your designs and public ends
First attracted us as friends.
But the present boiled and roast
Surprises and delights us most.

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* The notion of a person's being flayed, and having his skin converted into a wine-keg, appears to have been familiar to the imagination of the Athenians, and of frequent recurrence in their low colloquial language. Ctesiphon is only known as having been ridiculed by the comic poets for his extreme corpulence. The conqueror, therefore, would be rewarded with a prize of unusual magnitude.

DIC. Wait awhile, if nothing fails,
You shall see a dish of quails.
CHOR. We depend upon your care,
DIC. Rouse the fire and mend it there.
CHOR. See with what a gait and air,
What a magisterial look,
Like a cool determined cook,
He conducts the whole affair.*

Enter a COUNTRYMAN, *groaning and lamenting.*

COUNTR. O miserable! wretched! wretched man!
DIC. Fellow, take care with those unlucky words.
Apply them to yourself.
COUNTR. Ah, dear good friend,
So you've got peace; a peace all to yourself!
And if ye could but spare me a little drop,
Just only a little taste, only five years.
DIC. Why, what's the matter with ye?
COUNTR. I'm ruinated,
Quite and entirely, losing my poor beasts,
My oxen, I lost 'em, both of 'em.
DIC. In what way?
COUNTR. The Bœotians! the Bœotians! it was they.
They came down at the back of Phyle there,
And drove away my bullocks, both of 'em . . . .
DIC. But you're in white, I see; you're out of mourning.
COUNTR. [*in continuation*]
. . . . That indeed were all my comfort and support:

* A dignified and authoritative demeanour is an essential requisite to the perfection of the culinary character. The complete cook (as described in that admirable piece of good-humoured parody, *L'homme des champs à table*)

Donne avec dignité des loix dans sa cuisine,
Et dispose du sort d'un coq ou d'un dindon,
Avec l'air d'un sultan qui condamne au cordon :
Son maintien est altier, et sa mine farouche.

That used to serve for my manure and maintenance
In dung and daily bread; the poor dear beasts.

DIC. And what is it you want?

COUNTR. I'm blind well nigh,
With weeping and grief. Derketes is my name,
In a farm here next to Phyle born and bred:
So if ever you wish to do what's friendly by me,
Do smear my two poor eyes with the balsam of peace.

DIC. Friend, I'm not keeping a dispensary.

COUNTR. Do, just to get me a sight of my poor oxen.

DIC. Impossible! you must go to the hospital.

COUNTR. Do, pray, just only give me the least drop.

DIC. Not the least drop—not I—go—get ye gone.

COUNTR. Oh dear! oh dear! oh dear! my poor dear oxen! [*Exit.*

CHOR. He, the chief, is now possessing
Peace as an exclusive blessing,
Which he will not part withal.

DIC. Mix honey with the savoury dishes!
Be careful with the cuttle-fishes!
Stew me the kidneys with the caul!

CHOR. Hear him shout there! Hear him bawl!

DIC. [*louder*]. Season and broil him there—that eel!

CHOR. You don't consider what we feel;
We're famished here with waiting;
While you choke
Us with your smoke,
And deafen us with prating.

DIC. Those cutlets, brown them nicely—there—do ye mind.

Enter a BRIDESMAN.

BRID. Ho, Dicæopolis!

DIC. Who's there? Who's that?

BRID. A bridegroom, that has sent a dish of meat
From his marriage feast.

DIC. Well! come! That's handsome of him;
That's proper, whoever he is; that's as it should be.

BRID. In fact, my friend the bridegroom, he that sent it,
Objects to foreign service just at present;
He begs you'd favour him with the balsam of peace;
A trifling quantity, in the box I've brought.

DIC. No, no! take back the dish; I can't receive it.
Dispose it somewhere else; take it away.
I would not part with a particle of my balsam,
For all the world—not for a thousand drachmas,
But that young woman there, who's she?

BRID. The bridesmaid;
With a particular message from the bride;
Wishing to speak a word in private with you.

DIC. Well, what have ye got to say? Let's hear it all!
Come—step this way—No, nearer—in a whisper—
Nearer, I say—come, there now; tell me about it.

[*after listening with comic attention to a supposed whisper*].

Oh, bless me; what a capital, comical,
Extraordinary string of female reasons
For keeping a young bridegroom safe at home!
Well, we'll indulge her, since she's only a woman;
She's not obliged to serve; bring out the balsam!
Come, where's your little vial?—but I say—
Do you know the manner of it?—no, not you.
How should you, a girl like you! what; I must tell you?
Yes—and you'll tell the bride; she must observe;
When a ballot is on foot for foreign service;
At the hour of midnight, when he's fast asleep,
Then she must be particularly careful,
Without disturbing him, to anoint him. There!

[*giving her back the vial*]. *Exit* BRIDESMAID.

Now take the balsam back, and bring me a funnel
To rack my wine off. I must mix my wine.

CHOR. See yet another! posting here, it seems,
With awful tidings, anxious and aghast.

MESS. Ho, Lamachus, I say! Lamachus, Ho!
Here's terror and tribulation, wars and woe!

[LAMACHUS *appears, probably with some appendage, to mark the interest which he had been taking in the culinary operations supposed to be going on behind the stage.*]

LAM. What hasty summons shakes the castle gates?

MESS. The generals have despatched an order to you
To muster your caparisons and garrisons,
And march to the mountain passes; there to wait
In ambush in the snow: for fresh advices
Have been received, with a credible intimation
Of a suspicion of an expedition
Of a marauding party from Bœotia.

LAM. Generals! Aye, generals! the more the worse.

DIC. Well, is not it hard that a man can't eat his dinner,
But he's to be disturbed and called from table,
With wars, and Lamachuses, and what not?

LAM. You mock me, alas!

DIC. Say, would you wish to grapple,
In single combat, with this mailed monster?

[*showing a lobster*].

LAM. Alas, that dismal fatal messenger!

DIC. But here's a message too, coming for me.

2ND MESS. Ho, Dicæopolis!

DIC. Well, what?

2ND MESS. You're summoned
To go without a moment's loss of time,
With your whole cookery, to the priest of Bacchus.
The company are arrived; you keep them waiting,
Everything else is ready—couches, tables,

Cushions, and coverlids for mattresses,
Dancing and singing girls for mistresses,
Plum cake and plain, comfits and caraways,
Confectionery, fruits preserved and fresh,
Relishes of all sorts, hot things and bitter,
Savouries and sweets, broiled biscuits, and what not
Flowers and perfumes and garlands, everything.
You must not lose a moment.

LAM. Out alas!
Wretch that I am!

DIC. 'Tis your own fault entirely,
For enlisting in the service of the Gorgons.
There, shut the door, and serve the dishes here.

LAM. My knapsack and camp service; bring it out.

DIC. My dinner service; bring it here, you lout.

LAM. Give me my bunch of leeks, the soldiers' fare.

DIC. I'm partial to veal cutlets; bring them there.

LAM. Let's see the salt fish; it seems like to rot.

DIC. I take fresh fish, and broil it on the spot.

LAM. Bring me the lofty feathers of my crest.

DIC. Bring doves and quails; I scarce know which is best.

LAM. Behold this snowy plume of dazzling white.

DIC. Behold the roasted dove, a savoury sight.

LAM. Don't mock these arms of mine, good fellow, pri'thee.

DIC. These quails of mine, don't think to take them with ye.

LAM. The case that holds my crest—bring it in haste.

DIC. And the hare-pie for me—bring it in paste.

LAM. My crest—have the moths spoilt it? no, not yet.

DIC. My dinner—shall I spoil it by a whet.

LAM. Fellow, direct not your discourse to me.

DIC. Aye, but this boy and I, we can't agree;
And we've a kind of wager, which is best,
Locusts or quails, forsooth.

LAM. Sirrah, your jest
Is insolent.

DIC. My wager's gone this bout:
He's all, you see, for locusts, out and out.

Various demonstrations of menace and defiance take place between Lamachus and Dicæopolis. Lamachus has called for his lance in anger; Dicæopolis calls for the spit: both are brought, but neither of them in a state fit for service. Lamachus (after a hostile reconnoitring look), conscious of his present disadvantage, proceeds to unsheath his rusty weapon; but, in the meantime, Dicæopolis has succeeded in disengaging his spit from the roast meat, and appears again ready to confront him upon equal terms. Here again are reciprocal looks and gestures of hostility, which terminate in mutual forbearance. Any amusement which this scene might have afforded to the spectators, must have been derived from the humour of the performers; to the mere reader, and more particularly to the modern reader, it must be uninteresting; and might have been passed over, but for a wish (which perhaps has been carried too far) to omit nothing that was admissible.

LAM. Bring here my lance; unsheath the deadly point.

DIC. Bring here the spit, and show the roasted joint.

LAM. This sheath is rusted. Come, boy, tug and try.
Ah, there it comes.

DIC. [*unspitting his roast meat*].
It comes quite easily.

LAM. Bring forth the props of wood, my shield's support.

DIC. Bring bread, for belly timber; that's your sort!

LAM. My Gorgon-orbed shield; bring it with speed.

DIC. With this full-orbed pancake I proceed.

LAM. Is not this insolence too much to bear?

DIC. Is not this pancake exquisite and rare?

LAM. Pour oil upon the shield! What do I trace
In the divining mirror? 'Tis the face
Of an old coward, petrified with fear,
That sees his trial for desertion near.*

* It was a common practice to anoint the shield before battle. There was likewise a species of divination practised by figures reflected from an

DIC. Pour honey on the pancake! what appears?
A comely personage, advanced in years;
Firmly resolved to laugh at and defy
Both Lamachus and the Gorgon family.

LAM. Bring forth my trusty breastplate for the fight.

DIC. Bring forth the lusty goblet, my delight!

LAM. I'll charge with this, accoutred every limb.

DIC. I'll charge with this, a bumper to the brim.

LAM. Boys, strap the shield and bedding in a pack!
I'll bear myself my knapsack on my back.

DIC. Boy, strap the basket with my feasting mess;
While I just step within to change my dress.

LAM. Come, boy, take up my shield, and trudge away.
It snows!—Good lack; we've wintry work to-day.

DIC. Boy, take the basket. Jolly work, I say.

[*Exeunt severally.*

CHORUS.

Go your ways in sundry wise,
Each upon his enterprise.
One determined to carouse,
With a garland on his brows,
And a comely lass beside him.
His opponent forth hath eyed him,
Resolute to pass the night,
In a military plight,
Undelighted and alone;
Starving, wheezing,
Sneezing, freezing,
With his head upon a stone.

The action of the stage, and even all allusion to it, are suspended durin the following songs, which serve to afford an interval of dramatic

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oiled surface. These two usages are here alluded to. A similar mode of divination appears from the report of modern travellers to be still employed in Egypt.

time during which Dicæopolis may be supposed to have returned from his feast, and Lamachus from his expedition. The Chorus remain in possession of the stage, and of their primitive privilege of desultory individual satire. The latter is directed against Antimachus, who, it seems, had given offence to the dramatic powers by the scantiness of his entertainments. I do not know whether it would be refining too much, to observe that even this capricious sally harmonizes with what has preceded, as well as with the interval which is supposed to elapse; by the culinary images in the first part, and by the description of a person returning home late at night, in the second. Some circumstances in the original are omitted in the translation, as they seem intended to account for what does not appear unaccountable to a modern; namely, that a man should walk home at night without a stick. In the passage which immediately follows, the Chorus commence their remonstrance in a calm sober tone which they are unable to maintain. This effect is produced in the original, by the quiet prosaic methodical form of words by which Antimachus is designated—a nicety of tone which it was impossible to attain or at least to render obvious in a translation.

CHORUS.

We're determined to discuss
Our difference with Antimachus,
  Calmly, simply, candidly;
Praying to the powers above,
And the just almighty Jove,
  To—Sink and blast him utterly.
He that sent us all away
T'other evening from the play,
  Hungry, thirsty, supperless;
Him we shortly trust to see
Sunk in equal misery,
  In the like distress,
With a pennyworth of fish,
And a curious eager wish
  To behold it fried;
Let him watch, and wait, and turn,
With a hungry deep concern,
  Standing there beside.

Let an accident befall,
Which shall overturn the stall,
And the fishes frying;
There shall he behold the dish
Topsy-turvy, with the fish
In the kennel lying.
As he stoops to pick and wipe it,
Let a greedy greyhound gripe it,
Snatch and eat it flying.

Him let other ills befall,
Walking home beneath the wall,
Late at night, attacked by ruffians,
Orestes and his ragamuffins;
Unprotected and alone,
Groping round to find a stone,
Let him grasp for his defence
A ponderous sirreverence;
Furious, eager, in the dark,
Let him fling and miss the mark,
Smiting upon the cheek, but not severely,
Cratinus merely!

MESSENGER, SERVANT *of* LAMACHUS, LAMACHUS, DICÆOPOLIS, *and* CHORUS.

The following speech of the Messenger is a burlesque of the tragic speeches in which the arrival of the wounded hero was announced in the last act of a tragedy.

MESSENGER.

Ye slaves that dwell in Lamachus's mansion,
Prepare hot water instantly in the pipkin;*

* The "pipkin," in allusion to the scantiness of Lamachus's establishment. See p. 42.

With embrocations and emollients,
And bandages and plaster for your lord.
His foot is maimed and crippled with a stake,
Which wounded it, as he leaped across a trench.
His ankle-bone is out, his head is broken,
The Gorgon on his shield all smashed and spoiled.
But when the lofty plume of the cock lorrel
That decked his helm, fell downward in the dirt,
He groaned, and spake aloud despairingly:
"O glorious light of Heaven! Farewell, farewell!
For the last time; my destined days are done."
Thus moaning and lamenting, down he fell
Direct into the ditch; jumped up again;
Rushed out afresh; rallied the runaways;
Made the marauders run; ran after them,
With his spear point smiting their hinder parts.
But here he comes himself; set the door open.

Lamachus is brought in, wounded and disabled; his appearance and attendants are caricatures of the exhibition of the wounded heroes, whom it had become the fashion to introduce. The dialogue is a burlesque of the lyrical agonies and lamentations of the same personages.

LAM. Out, out alas!
I'm racked and torn,
With agony scarce to be borne,
From that accursed spear:
But worst of all, I fear,
If Dicæopolis beholds me here,
That he, my foe, will chuckle at my fall.

DIC. My charming lass,
What joy is this!
What ecstasy! do give me a kiss!
There coax me, and hug me close, and sympathize;
I've swigged the gallon off; I've won the prize.

LAM. O what a consummation of my woes,
What throbs and throes!

DIC. Eh there! my little Lamachus! How goes?

LAM. I'm in distress.

DIC. I'm in no less.

LAM. Mock not at my misery.

DIC. Accuse me not of mockery.

LAM. 'Twas at the final charge; I'd paid before
A number of the rogues; at least a score.

DIC. It was a most expensive charge you bore:
Poor Lamachus! he was forced to pay the score!

LAM. O mercy, mighty Apollo!

DIC. What, do ye holloh
A'ter Apollo? it an't his feast to-day.

LAM. [*to his bearers*].
Don't press me,
Dear friends!
But place me
Gently and tenderly.

DIC. [*to the women*].
Caress me,
Dear girls!
Embrace me
Gently and tenderly.

LAM. Strip off the incumbrance of this warlike gea
And take me to my bed. . . . .

DIC. Strip off incumbrances, my pretty dear,
And take me off to bed.

LAM. Or bear me to the public hospital
With care.

DIC. Bring me before the judges; one and all
Look there!
I've won the prize;
As this true gallon measure testifies.
I've drunk it off, "I triumph great and glorious."

CHOR. And well you may; triumph away, good fellow; you're victorious.

DIC. To show my manhood furthermore, and spirit in the struggle,
I quaffed it off within my breath; I gulped it in a guggle.*

CHOR. Then take the wine-skin as your due.
We triumph and rejoice with you.

DIC. Then fill my train,
And join the strain.

CHOR. With all my heart;
We'll bear a part.

ALL. We're triumphant, great and glorious,
We're victorious,
Hurrah!
We've won the day,
Wine-skin and all!
Hurrah!

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* Drinking without deglutition; still practised in Catalonia—the Thracian Amystis.

THE KNIGHTS.

The Knights.

The following translation not being calculated for general circulation, it is not likely that it should fall into the hands of any reader whose knowledge of antiquity would not enable him to dispense with the fatigue of perusing a prefatory history. Such prefaces are already before the public, accompanying the translations of Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Walsh, and will be found satisfactory to those who may be desirous of preliminary information.

It may not, however, be altogether superfluous to prefix a brief summary of preceding circumstances. We have already seen, that the poet, in his comedy of "The Babylonians," had made an attack upon the leading demagogues and peculators of his time. In return for this aggression, Cleon (as described in "The Acharnians"),

> "Had dragged him to the Senate House,
> And trodden him down and bellowed over him,
> And mauled him till he scarce escaped alive."

The poet, however, recovered himself, and in the Parabasis of the same play had defied and insulted the demagogue in the most unsparing terms. In the course, however, of the following summer, Cleon, by a singular concurrence of circumstances, had been raised to the highest pitch of favour and popularity. A body of 400 Spartans having been cut off, and blockaded in an island of the Bay of Pylos, now Navarino, this disaster, in which many of the first families of Sparta were involved, induced that republic to sue for peace; which Cleon, who considered his power and influence as dependent on the continuance of the war, was determined to oppose. Insisting, therefore, that the blockaded troop could be considered in no other light than as actual prisoners, he finally pledged himself, with a given additional force, to reduce the Spartans to surrender within a limited time; this he had the good fortune and dexterity to effect, and to secure the whole

credit of the result for himself; having in virtue of his appointment superseded the blockading general, Demosthenes; while at the same time he secured the benefit of his experience and ability by retaining him as a colleague. The reader, if he has the work at hand, will do well to refer to Mr. Mitford's History, c. xv. sec. x., for a detailed account of this most singular incident, strikingly illustrative of the distinct character of the two rival republics. It was then, immediately after this event, when his adversary's power and popularity were at their height, that the poet, undeterred by these apparent disadvantages, produced this memorable and extraordinary drama.

For those readers to whom any further introduction may be necessary, a list of the dramatis personæ, with some accompanying explanations, will perhaps be sufficient.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DEMUS.—A personification of the Athenian people; the John Bull of Athens, a testy, selfish, suspicious old man, a tyrant to his slaves, with the exception of one (a new acquisition), the Paphlagonian—Cleon, by whom he is cajoled and governed.

NICIAS and DEMOSTHENES.—The two most fortunate and able generals of the republic, of very opposite characters; the one cautious and superstitious in the extreme; the other a blunt, hearty, resolute, jolly fellow, a very decided lover of good wine. These two, *the servants of the public*, are naturally introduced as *the slaves of Demus*. After complaining of the ill-treatment to which they are subject in consequence of their master's partiality to his newly purchased slave the Paphlagonian, they determine to supplant him, which they effect in conformity to the directions of a secret Oracle, in which they find it predicted that the Tanner (*i.e.*, Cleon the Paphlagonian) shall be superseded by a person of meaner occupation and lower character.

CLEON.—The Tanner (as he is called from his property consisting in a leather manufactory), or the Paphlagonian (a nickname applied in ridicule of his mode of speaking from the word *paphlazo*, to foam), has been already described. He is represented as a fawning obsequious slave, insolent and arrogant to all except his master, the terror of his fellow-servants.

A SAUSAGE-SELLER, whose name Agoracritus, "so called from the Agora where I got my living," is not declared till towards the conclusion of the play, is the person announced by the Oracle, as ordained by fate, to baffle the Paphlagonian, and to supersede him in the favour of his master. His breeding and education are described as having been similar to that of the younger Mr. Weller, in that admirable and most unvulgar exhibition of vulgar life, "The Pickwick Papers."

Finally, after a long struggle, his undaunted vulgarity of superior dexterity are crowned with deserved success. He supplants the Paphlagonian, and is installed in the supreme direction of the old gentleman's affairs.

It appears that the poet must have been subjected to some particular disadvantages and embarrassments in the production of this play. We have seen, that in the preceding comedy of "The Acharnians," Lamachus, a young military character, had been personated on the stage, and had been addressed by name, without disguise or equivocation, throughout the whole of that play. This is no longer the case in this play now before us: Nicias, Demosthenes, and Cleon himself, are in no instance addressed by name. It should seem, therefore, that some enactment must have taken place, restraining the licence of comedy in this particular; and here a distinction is to be observed between the choral parts and the dramatic dialogue; for in this very play Cleon is most unsparingly abused by name in the choral songs. The fact seems to have been that the licentious privilege of the "Sacred Chorus," consecrated by immemorial usage, and connected with the rites of Bacchus, could not be abridged by mere human authority: while the dramatic dialogue (originally derived, in all probability, from scenes in dumb show, which had been introduced to relieve the monotony of the Chorus) was regarded as mere recent invention destitute of any divine sanction, and liable to be modified and restrained by the power of the State.

With respect to Nicias and Demosthenes, the poet could have found no difficulty in evading the new law. The masks worn by the actors presenting a caricature-likeness of each of them, would be sufficient to identify them; and it could not be supposed that either of them would be offended at being brought forward in burlesque, when the poet's intention was evidently friendly towards them both; the whole drift of his comedy being directed against their main antagonist and rival. For the caricature in which they themselves were represented, was in no respect calculated to make them unpopular; on the contrary, the blunt heartiness and good-fellowship of the one, and the timid scrupulous piety of the other, were qualities which in different ways recommended them respectively to the favour and goodwill of their fellow-citizens, and which were accordingly exhibited and impressed upon the attention of the audience, through the only medium which was consistent with the essential character of the ancient comedy.

But among the audience themselves there would undoubtedly be some gainsayers, who if they were not silenced at the first outset, might have interrupted the attention of others—"This is too bad," they might have said, "The poet will get himself into a scrape. Here

is a manifest infraction of the new law." In order to obviate this, the poet in the first scene, before the proper subject of his comedy is developed, but at the precise point when his individual characters, Nicias and Demosthenes, were sufficiently marked and identified, submits the question to a theatrical vote, appealing to the audience for their sanction and approbation of the course which he has adopted. This appeal, marked as it is with a character of caution and timidity, is, with a humorous propriety, assigned to the part of Nicias; with Cleon, however, the case was different, and there was a difficulty which it required all the courage and ability of the poet to surmount—no actor dared to expose himself to the resentment of the demagogue by personating him upon the stage, and among the artists who worked for the theatre, fearful of being considered as accomplices of the poet in his evasion of the new law, no one could be found who would venture to produce the representation of his countenance in a theatrical mask. The poet, therefore, undertook the part himself, and for want of a mask disguised his own features, according to the rude method of primitive comedy, by smearing them with the lees of wine. It is worthy of remark that in his effort to surmount this difficulty he has contrived to identify the demagogue from the first moment of his appearance, concentrating his essential character and his known peculiarities in a speech of five lines—his habitual boisterous oath and a slangish use of the dual.

In order to occupy the vacant space which has been left by the printer, the translator is tempted, for once, to insert a justificatory comment. The speech of Nicias in the opposite page is extended to three lines; in the original it consists of a line and a half, which might be more accurately and concisely translated thus:

> "Yes, let him perish in the worst way possible,
> With all his lies, for a first-rate Paphlagonian."

But there would be one main defect in this accurate translation, namely, that it would not express the intention of the author, nor the effect produced by the actor in repeating the original; for if we consider it in this view, we find that, short as it is, it contains three distinct breaks; one at the end of the second word, another at the end of the third, and a third at the end of the line. These momentary pauses are characteristic of timid resentment, expressing itself by fits and starts,—a character which, to the English reader perusing a printed text, could not be rendered obvious without employing a compass of words much larger than the original.

Again, we see that the courage and anger of Nicias, even with the help of the beating which he has just received, are barely sufficient to enable him to follow the example of Demosthenes; even in wrath and pain he is contented to "say ditto" to what his comrade had said before. The poet's intention, in this respect, is made more distinctly palpable to the English reader by the first line of the translated speech.

And thus much may serve for a commentary on a passage of three lines, and as a sample of others, which if they were not wearisome and egotistical might be extended to every page of this and the preceding play.

[*After a noise of lashes and screams from behind the scenes,* DEMOSTHENES *comes out, and is followed by* NICIAS *the supposed victim of flagellation (both in the dress of slaves).* DEMOSTHENES *breaks out in great wrath; while* NICIAS *remains exhibiting various contortions of pain for the amusement of the audience.*]

DEM. Out! out alas! what a scandal! what a shame!
May Jove in his utter wrath crush and confound
That rascally new-bought Paphlagonian slave!
For from the very first day that he came—
Brought here for a plague and a mischief amongst us all,
We're beaten and abused continually.

NIC. [*whimpering in a broken voice*]
I say so too, with all my heart I do,
A rascal, with his slanders and lies!
A rascally Paphlagonian! so he is!

DEM. [*roughly and good-humouredly*].
How are you, my poor soul?

NIC. [*pettishly and whining*]. Why poorly enough;
And so are you for that matter.

[NICIAS *continues writhing and moaning*].

DEM. [*as if speaking to a child that had hurt himself*].
Well, come here then!
Come, and we'll cry together, both of us,
We'll sing it to Olympus's old tune.

BOTH. [DEMOSTHENES *accompanies* NICIAS'S *involuntary sobs, so as to make a tune of them.*]
Mo moo momoo—momoo momoo—Momoo momoo.*
DEM. [*suddenly and heartily*].
Come, grief's no use—It's folly to keep crying.
Let's look about us a bit, what's best to be done.
NIC. [*recovering himself*].
Aye, tell me; what do you think?
DEM. No, you tell me—
Lest we should disagree.
NIC. That's what I won t!
Do you speak boldly first, and I'll speak next.
DEM. [*significantly, as quoting a well-known verse*].
"You first might utter, what I wish to tell." †
NIC. Aye, but I'm so down-hearted, I've not spirit
To bring about the avowal cleverly,
In Euripides's style, by question and answer.
DEM. Well, then, don't talk of Euripides any more,
Or his mother either; don't stand picking endive: ‡
But think of something in another style,
To the tune of "Trip and away."
NIC. Yes, I'll contrive it:
Say "Let us" first; put the first letter to it,
And then the last, and then put E, R, T.
"Let us Az ert." I say, "Let us Azert."

---

* Our common tune, with a syllable added to it, may be made to suit the trimeter iambic, and may be sung lamentably enough:

"When War's alarms first tore my Willy from me." / my arms.

A friend who has accidentally taken up this sheet, tells me that he heard this very chant, "Mo moo," &c., on the coast opposite Corfu, in a house where the family were moaning over the dead.

† From the tragedy of "Phædra:" she is trying to lead her nurse to mention the name of Hippolytus, while she avoids it herself.

‡ His mother was said to have been a herb woman.

'Tis now your turn—take the next letter to it.
Put B for A.

DEM. "Let us Bezert," I say—

NIC. 'Tis now my turn—"Let us Cezert," I say.
'Tis now your turn.

DEM. "Let us Dezert," I say.

NIC. You've said it!—and I agree to it—now repeat it
Once more!

DEM. Let us Dezert! Let us Dezert!

NIC. That's well.

DEM. But somehow it seems unlucky, rather
An awkward omen to meet with in a morning!
"To meet with our deserts!"

NIC. That's very true;
Therefore, I think, in the present state of things,
The best thing for us both, would be, to go
Directly to the shrine of one of the gods;
And pray for mercy, both of us together.

DEM. Shrines! shrines! Why sure, you don't believe in the gods.

NIC. I do.

DEM. But what's your argument? Where's your proof?

NIC. Because I feel they persecute me and hate me,
In spite of everything I try to please 'em.

DEM. Well, well. That's true; you're right enough in that.

NIC. Let's settle something.

DEM. Come, then—if you like
I'll state our case at once, to the audience here.

NIC. It would not be much amiss; but first of all,
We must entreat of them; if the scene and action
Have entertained them hitherto, to declare it,
And encourage us with a little applause beforehand.

DEM. [*to the audience*].
Well, come now! I'll tell ye about it. Here are we
A couple of servants, with a master at home

Next door to the hustings. He's a man in years,
A kind of a bean-fed* husky testy character,
Choleric and brutal at times, and partly deaf.
It's near about a month now, that he went
And bought a slave out of a tanner's yard,
A Paphlagonian born, and brought him home,
As wicked a slanderous wretch as ever lived.
This fellow, the Paphlagonian, has found out
The blind side of our master's understanding,
With fawning and wheedling in this kind of way :
"Would not you please to go to the bath, Sir? surely
It's not worth while to attend the courts to-day." †
And, "Would not you please to take a little refreshment?
And there's that nice hot broth—And here's the threepence
You left behind you—And would not you order supper?"
Moreover, when we get things out of compliment
As a present for our master, he contrives
To snatch 'em and serve 'em up before our faces.
I'd made a Spartan cake at Pylos lately,
And mixed and kneaded it well, and watched the baking;
But he stole round before me and served it up :
And he never allows us to come near our master
To speak a word; but stands behind his back
At meal times, with a monstrous leathern fly-flap,
Slapping and whisking it round and rapping us off.
Sometimes the old man falls into moods and fancies,
Searching the prophecies till he gets bewildered;
And then the Paphlagonian plies him up,
Driving him mad with oracles and predictions.
And that's his harvest. Then he slanders us,
And gets us beaten and lashed, and goes his rounds

* In allusion to the beans used in balloting.
† Sacrifices, with distribution of meat, and largesses to the people on holidays.

Bullying in this way, to squeeze presents from us:
"You saw what a lashing Hylas got just now;
You'd best make friends with me, if you love your lives.
Why then, we give him a trifle, or if we don't,
We pay for it; for the old fellow knocks us down,
And kicks us on the ground, and stamps and rages,
And tramples out the very guts of us—
[*turning to* NICIAS]
So now, my worthy fellow; we must take
A fixed determination;—now's the time,
Which way to turn ourselves and what to do.

NIC. Our last determination was the best:
That which we settled to A' Be Ce *Desert.*

DEM. Aye, but we could not escape the Paphlagonian,
He overlooks us all; he keeps one foot
In Pylos, and another in the Assembly;
And stands with such a stature, stride and grasp;
That while his mouth is open in Eatolia,*
One hand is firmly clenched upon the Lucrians,
And the other stretching forth to the Peribribeans.

NIC.† Let's die then, once for all; that's the best way,
Only we must contrive to manage it,
Nobly and manfully in a proper manner.

DEM. Aye, aye. Let's do things manfully! that's my maxim!

NIC.‡ Well, there's the example of Themistocles—
To drink bull's blood: that seems a manly death.

DEM. Bull's blood! The blood of the grape, I say! good wine!
Who knows? it might inspire some plan, some project,
Some notion or other, a good draught of it!

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* Etolia, Locrians, Perrhebians.
† In utter despondency, but with a sort of quiet quakerish composure.
‡ As before.

NIC. Wine truly! wine!—still hankering after liquor!
Can wine do anything for us? Will your drink
Enable you to arrange a plan to save us?
Can wisdom ever arise from wine, do ye think?

DEM. Do ye say so? You're a poor spring-water pitcher!
A silly chilly soul. I'll tell ye what:
*It's a very presumptuous thing to speak of liquor,
As an obstacle to people's understanding;
It's the only thing for business and dispatch.
D'ye observe how individuals thrive and flourish
By dint of drink: they prosper in proportion;
They improve their properties; they get promotion;
Make speeches, and make interest, and make friends.
Come, quick now—bring me a lusty stoup of wine,
To moisten my understanding and inspire me.

NIC. Oh dear! your drink will be the ruin of us!

DEM. It will be the making of ye! Bring it here.

[*Exit* NICIAS.

I'll rest me a bit; but when I've got my fill,
I'll overflow them all, with a flood of rhetoric,
With metaphors and phrases and what not.

[NICIAS *returns in a sneaking way with a pot of wine.*]

NIC. [*in a sheepish silly tone of triumph*].
How lucky for me it was, that I escaped
With the wine that I took!

DEM. [*carelessly and bluntly*]. Well, where's the Paphlagonian?

NIC. [*as before*]. He's fast asleep—within there, on his back,
On a heap of hides—the rascal! with his belly full,
With a hash of confiscations half-digested.

* Though Dem. has not been drinking, his speech has the tone of a drunken man.

DEM. That's well! Now fill me a hearty lusty draught.

NIC. [*formally and precisely*].
Make the libation first, and drink this cup
To the good Genius.

DEM. [*respiring after a long draught*]. O most worthy Genius!
Good Genius! 'tis your genius that inspires me!

[DEMOSTHENES *remains in a sort of drunken burlesque ecstasy.*]

NIC. Why, what's the matter?

DEM. I'm inspired to tell you,
That you must steal the Paphlagonian's oracles
Whilst he's asleep.*

NIC. Oh dear then, I'm afraid,
This Genius will turn out my evil Genius. [*Exit* NICIAS.

DEM. Come, I must meditate, and consult my pitcher;
And moisten my understanding a little more.

[*The interval of* NICIAS'S *absence is occupied by action in dumb show:* DEMOSTHENES *is enjoying himself and getting drunk in private.*]

NIC. [*re-entering with a packet*].
How fast asleep the Paphlagonian was:
Lord bless me, how mortally he snored and stank.
However, I've contrived to carry it off,
The sacred oracle that he kept so secret—
I've stolen it from him.

DEM. [*very drunk*]. That's my clever fellow!
Here give us hold; I must read 'em. Fill me a bumper.
In the meanwhile—make haste now. Let me see now—

* A general feature of human nature, nowhere more observable than among boys at school; where the poor timid soul is always dispatched upon the most perilous expeditions. Nicias is the fag—Demosthenes the big boy.

What have we got?—What are they,—these same papers?
Oh! oracles! . . . . o—ra—cles!—Fill me a stoup of wine.

[*In this part of the scene a contrast is kept up between the subordinate nervous eagerness of poor* NICIAS, *and the predominant drunken phlegmatic indifference of* DEMOSTHENES; *who is supposed to amuse himself with irritating the impatience of his companion; while he details to him by driblets the contents of his own packet.*]

NIC. [*fidgeting and impatient after giving him the wine*].
Come! come! what says the Oracle?

DEM. Fill it again!

NIC. Does the Oracle say, that I must fill it again?

DEM. [*after tumbling over the papers with a hiccup*].
O Bakis! *

NIC. What?

DEM. Fill me the stoup this instant.

NIC. [*with a sort of puzzled acquiescence*].
Well, Bakis, I've been told, was given to drink;
He prophesied in his liquor people say.

DEM. [*with the papers in his hand*].
Aye, there it is—you rascally Paphlagonian!
This was the prophecy that you kept so secret.

NIC. What's there?

DEM. Why there's a thing to ruin him,
With the manner of his destruction, all foretold.

NIC. As how?

DEM. [*very drunk*]. Why the Oracle tells you how—distinctly—
And all about it—in a perspicuous manner—
That a jobber † in hemp and flax is first ordained
To hold the administration of affairs.

* Dem.'s articulation of this word is assisted by a hiccup.

† After the death of Pericles, Eucrates and Lysicles had each taken the lead for a short time.

NIC. Well, there's one jobber. Who's the next? Read on!

DEM. A cattle jobber* must succeed to him.

NIC. More jobbers! well—then what becomes of him?

DEM. He too shall prosper, till a viler rascal
Shall be raised up, and shall prevail against him,
In the person of a Paphlagonian tanner,
A loud rapacious leather-selling ruffian.

NIC. Is it foretold then, that the cattle jobber
Must be destroyed by the seller of leather?

DEM. Yes.

NIC. Oh dear, our sellers and jobbers are at an end.

DEM. Not yet; there's still another to succeed him,
Of a most uncommon notable occupation.

NIC. Who's that? Do tell me!

DEM. Must I?

NIC. To be sure.

DEM. A sausage-seller it is, that supersedes him.

NIC.† A sausage-seller! marvellous indeed,
Most wonderful! But where can he be found?

DEM. We must seek him out.

[DEMOSTHENES *rises and bustles up, with the action of a person who, having been drunk, is rousing and recollecting himself for a sudden important occasion. His following speeches are all perfectly sober.*]

NIC. But see there, where he comes!
Sent hither providentially as it were!

DEM. O happy man! celestial sausage-seller!
Friend, guardian and protector of us all!
Come forward; save your friends, and save the country.

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* See note † on preceding page.
† In the tone of Domine Sampson.

S. S. Do you call me?

DEM. Yes, we called to you, to announce
The high and happy destiny that awaits you.

NIC. Come, now you should set him free from the incumbrance *
Of his table and basket; and explain to him
The tenor and the purport of the Oracle,
While I go back to watch the Paphlagonian. [*Exit* NICIAS.

DEM. [*to the* SAUSAGE-SELLER *gravely*].
Set these poor wares aside; and now—bow down
To the ground; and adore the powers of earth and heaven.

S. S. Heigh-day! Why, what do you mean?

DEM. O happy man!
Unconscious of your glorious destiny,
Now mean and unregarded; but to-morrow,
The mightiest of the mighty, Lord of Athens.

S. S. Come, master, what's the use of making game?
Why can't ye let me wash the guts and tripe,
And sell my sausages in peace and quiet?

DEM. O simple mortal, cast those thoughts aside!
Bid guts and tripe farewell! Look there! Behold
[*pointing to the audience*]
The mighty assembled multitude before ye!

S. S. [*with a grumble of indifference*].
I see 'em.

DEM. You shall be their lord and master,
The sovereign and the ruler of them all,
Of the assemblies and tribunals, fleets and armies;
You shall trample down the Senate under foot,
Confound and crush the generals and commanders,

---

* This speech is intended to express the sudden impression of reverence with which Nicias is affected in the presence of the predestined supreme Sausage-seller. He does not presume to address him; but obliquely manifests his respect, by pointing out to Demosthenes (in his hearing) the marks of attention to which he is entitled.

Arrest, imprison, and confine in irons,
And feast and fornicate in the Council House.*

S. S. What, I?

DEM. Yes, you yourself: there's more to come.
Mount here; and from the trestles of your stall
Survey the subject islands circling round.

S. S. I see 'em.

DEM. And all their ports and merchant vessels?

S. S. Yes, all.

DEM. Then an't you a fortunate happy man?
An't you content? Come then for a further prospect—
Turn your right eye to Caria, and your left
To Carthage! †—and contemplate both together.

S. S. Will it do me good, d'ye think, to learn to squint?

DEM. Not so; but everything you see before you
Must be disposed of at your high discretion,
By sale or otherwise; for the Oracle
Predestines you to sovereign power and greatness.

S. S. Are there any means of making a great man
Of a sausage-selling fellow such as I?

DEM. The very means you have, must make ye so,
Low breeding, vulgar birth, and impudence,
These, these must make ye, what you're meant to be.

S. S. I can't imagine that I'm good for much.

DEM. Alas! But why do ye say so? What's the meaning
Of these misgivings? I discern within ye
A promise and an inward consciousness

---

* The Prytaneum, see "Acharnians," v. 126: the honour of a seat at the public table was sometimes conferred on persons of extraordinary merit in advanced years. See the Parabasis of this play; see also the Apology of Socrates. Cleon had obtained this privilege for himself, and abused it insolently as appears elsewhere.

† "Carthage" must be the true reading, the right eye to Caria and the left to "Chalcedon" would not constitute a squint.

Of greatness. Tell me truly: are ye allied
To the families of gentry?

S. S. Naugh, not I;
I'm come from a common ordinary kindred,
Of the lower order.

DEM. What a happiness!
What a footing will it give ye! What a groundwork
For confidence and favour at your outset!

S. S. But bless ye! only consider my education!
I can but barely read . . . . in a kind of a way.

DEM. That makes against ye!—the only thing against ye—
The being able to read, in any way:
For now; no lead nor influence is allowed
To liberal arts or learned education,
But to the brutal, base, and under-bred.
Embrace then and hold fast the promises
Which the oracles of the gods announce to you.

S. S. But what does the Oracle say?

DEM. Why thus it says,
In a figurative language, but withal
Most singularly intelligible and distinct,
Neatly expressed i'faith, concisely and tersely.*

"Moreover, when the eagle in his pride,
With crooked talons and a leathern hide,
Shall seize the black and blood-devouring snake;
Then shall the woeful tanpits quail and quake;
And mighty Jove shall give command and place,
To mortals of the sausage-selling race;
Unless they choose, continuing as before,
To sell their sausages for evermore."

* This is perfectly in character. Demosthenes (as we have seen) does not profess to believe in the gods; yet we see that upon occasion he can discuss the merit of the "sacred classics;" like other critics therefore, of the same description, he does it with a sort of patronizing tone.

S. S. But how does this concern me? Explain it, will ye?

DEM. The leathern eagle is the Paphlagonian.

S. S. What are his talons?

DEM. That explains itself—
Talons for peculation and rapacity.

S. S. But what's the snake?

DEM. The snake is clear and obvious:
The snake is long and black, like a black-pudding;
The snake is filled with blood, like a black-pudding.
Our Oracle foretells then, that the snake
Shall baffle and overpower the leathern eagle.

S. S. These oracles hit my fancy! Notwithstanding . . . .
I'm partly doubtful, how I could contrive . . . .
To manage an administration altogether . . . .

DEM. The easiest thing in nature!—nothing easier!
Stick to your present practice: follow it up
In your new calling. Mangle, mince and mash,
Confound and hack, and jumble things together!
And interlard your rhetoric with lumps
Of mawkish sweet, and greasy flattery.
Be fulsome, coarse, and bloody! For the rest,
All qualities combine, all circumstances,
To entitle and equip you for command;
A filthy voice, a villainous countenance,
A vulgar birth, and parentage, and breeding.
Nothing is wanting, absolutely nothing.
And the oracles and responses of the gods,
And prophecies, all conspire in your behalf.
Place then this chaplet on your brows!—and worship
The anarchic powers; and rouse your spirits up
To encounter him.

S. S. But who do ye think will help me?
For all our wealthier people are alarmed,

And terrified at him; and the meaner sort
In a manner stupefied, grown dull and dumb.
DEM. Why there's a thousand lusty cavaliers,
Ready to back you, that detest and scorn him;
And every worthy well-born citizen;
And every candid critical spectator;
And I myself; and the help of heaven to boot.
And never fear; his face will not be seen,
For all the manufacturers of masks,
From cowardice, refused to model it.
It matters not; his person will be known:
Our audience is a shrewd one—they can guess—
NIC. [*in alarm from behind the scenes*].
Oh dear! oh dear! the Paphlagonian's coming.

Enter CLEON *with a furious look and voice.*

CLEON. By heaven and earth! you shall abide it dearly,
With your conspiracies and daily plots
Against the sovereign people! Hah! what's this?
What's this Chalcidian goblet doing here?
Are ye tempting the Chalcidians to revolt? *
Dogs! villains! every soul of ye shall die.
[*The* SAUSAGE-SELLER *runs off in a fright.*
DEM. Where are ye going? Where are ye running? Stop!
Stand firm, my noble valiant Sausage-seller!
Never betray the cause. Your friends are nigh.
[*to the* CHORUS]
Cavaliers and noble captains! now's the time! advance in sight!
March in order—make the movement, and out-flank him on the right!

* The Chalcidians did in fact revolt in the following year; their intentions were probably suspected at the time.

[*to the* SAUSAGE-SELLER]

There I see them bustling, hasting !—only turn and make a stand,

Stop but only for a moment, your allies are hard at hand.

It is necessary to repair an omission which the reader may have already noticed. Among the dramatis personæ enumerated in page 84, no mention has been made of the Chorus, from which, as usual, the comedy derived its title—"The Knights." This body composing the middle order of the State were, as it appears, decidedly hostile to Cleon. In the first lines of the preceding play, the merit of having procured his conviction and punishment on a charge of bribery is ascribed to them ; and again, in the same play, the Chorus express their detestation of the demagogue by threatening to sacrifice him to the vengeance of the knights,* and we have just seen that Demosthenes encourages the Sausage-seller by promising him the assistance of a thousand of these "lusty cavaliers," who "scorn and detest" his antagonist.

[*During the last lines the* CHORUS OF CAVALIERS *with their hobby-horses have entered and occupied their position in the orchestra. They begin their attack upon* CLEON.]

CHOR. Close around him, and confound him, the confounder of us all.

Pelt him, pummel him and maul him ; rummage, ransack, overhaul him.

Overbear him and out-bawl him ; bear him down and bring him under.

Bellow like a burst of thunder, robber ! harpy ! sink of plunder !

Rogue and villain ! rogue and cheat ! rogue and villain, I repeat !

Oftener than I can repeat it, has the rogue and villain cheated.

---

* See "Acharnians," p. 28.

Close around him left and right; spit upon him; spurn and smite:
Spit upon him as you see; spurn and spit at him like me.
But beware, or he'll evade ye, for he knows the private track,
Where Eucrates * was seen escaping with the mill dust on his back.

CLEON. Worthy veterans of the jury, you that either right or wrong,
With my threepenny provision,† I've maintained and cherished long,
Come to my aid! I'm here waylaid—assassinated and betrayed!

CHOR. Rightly served! we serve you rightly, for your hungry love of pelf,
For your gross and greedy rapine, gormandizing by yourself;
You that ere the figs are gathered, pilfer with a privy twitch
Fat delinquents and defaulters, pulpy, luscious, plump, and rich;
Pinching, fingering, and pulling—tampering, selecting, culling,
With a nice survey discerning, which are green and which are turning,
Which are ripe for accusation, forfeiture, and confiscation.
Him besides, the wealthy man, retired upon an easy rent,
Hating and avoiding party, noble-minded, indolent,

---

* See note to p. 94.—He was also an owner of mills, as appears by the Scholiast.

† The juryman's fee, a means of subsistence to poor old men driven from their homes by the war.

Fearful of official snares, intrigues and intricate affairs;
Him you mark; you fix and hook him, whilst he's gaping
unawares;
At a fling, at once you bring him hither from the
Chersonese,*
Down you cast him, roast and baste him, and devour him
at your ease.

CLEON. Yes! assault, insult, abuse me! this is the return,
I find,
For the noble testimony, the memorial I designed:
Meaning to propose proposals, for a monument of stone,
On the which, your late achievements,† should be carved
and neatly done.

CHOR. Out, away with him! the slave! the pompous
empty fawning knave!
Does he think with idle speeches to delude and cheat us
all?
As he does the doting elders, that attend his daily call.‡
Pelt him here, and bang him there; and here and there and
everywhere.

CLEON. Save me, neighbours! O the monsters! O my
side, my back, my breast!

CHOR. What, you're forced to call for help? You brutal
overbearing pest.

S. S. [*returning to* CLEON].
I'll astound you with my voice; with my bawling looks and
noise.

CHOR. If in bawling you surpass him, you'll achieve a
victor's crown;
If again you overmatch him, in impudence, the day's our
own.

---

* Of Thrace. Many Athenians possessed estates, and resided there for a quiet life.

† In the expedition to Corinth.

‡ The veterans of the jury. See note, p. 102.

CLEON. I denounce this traitor here, for sailing on clandestine trips,
With supplies of tripe and stuffing, to careen the Spartan ships.

S. S. I denounce then and accuse him, for a greater worse abuse:
That he steers his empty paunch, and anchors at the public board:
Running in without a lading, to return completely stored!

CHOR. Yes! and smuggles out, moreover, loaves and luncheons not a few,
More than ever Pericles, in all his pride, presumed to do.

CLEON. [*in a thundering tone*]. Dogs and villains, you shall die!

S. S. [*in a louder, shriller tone*].
Aye! I can scream ten times as high.

CLEON. I'll overbear ye, and out-bawl ye.

S. S. But I'll out-scream ye, and out-squall ye.

CLEON. I'll impeach you, whilst aboard,
Commanding on a foreign station.

S. S.* I'll have you sliced, and slashed, and scored.

CLEON. Your lion's skin of reputation,
Shall be flayed off your back and tanned.

S. S. I'll take those guts of yours in hand.

CLEON. Come, bring your eyes and mine to meet!
And stare at me without a wink!

S. S. Yes! in the market-place and street,
I had my birth and breeding too;
And from a boy, to blush or blink,
I scorn the thing as much as you.

CLEON. I'll denounce you if you mutter.

S. S. I'll douse ye the first word you utter.

---

* The threats of each party are in the terms of their respective trades.

CLEON. My thefts are open and avowed;
And I confess them, which you dare not.

S. S. But I can take false oaths aloud,
And in the presence of a crowd;
And if they know the fact I care not.

CLEON. What! do you venture to invade
My proper calling and my trade?
But I denounce here, on the spot,
The sacrificial tripe you've got;
The tithe it owes was never paid:
It owes a tithe, I say, to Jove;
You've wronged and robbed the powers above.

CHORUS.—*Cretic Metre.**

Dark and unsearchably profound abyss,
Gulf of unfathomable
Baseness and iniquity!
Miracle of immense,
Intense impudence!
Every court, every hall,
Juries and assemblies, all
Are stunned to death, deafened all,
Whilst you bawl.
The bench and bar
Ring and jar.
Each decree
Smells of thee,
Land and sea
Stink of thee.
Whilst we
Scorn and hate, execrate, abominate,
Thee the brawler and embroiler, of the nation and the State.
You that on the rocky seat of our assembly raise a din,

* See note to "Acharnians," p. 24.

Deafening all our ears with uproar, as you rave and howl and grin;
Watching all the while the vessels with revenue sailing in.
Like the tunny-fishers perched aloft, to look about and bawl,
When the shoals are seen arriving, ready to secure a haul.

CLEON. I was aware of this affair, and every stitch of it I know,
Where the plot was cobbled up and patched together, long ago.

S. S. Cobbling is your own profession, tripe and sausages are mine:
But the country folks complain,* that in a fraudulent design,
You retailed them skins of treaties, that appeared like trusty leather,
Of a peace secure and lasting; but the wear-and-tear and weather
Proved it all decayed and rotten, only fit for sale and show.

DEM. Yes! a pretty trick he served me; there was I despatched to go,
Trudged away to Pergasæ,* but found upon arriving there,
That myself and mv commission, both were out at heels and bare.

In a review of Mr. Mitchell's Aristophanes, a passage in his translation of one of the choruses is noted with particular commendation. It is said, "Mr. Mitchell has hit upon the very key-note of Aristophanes, whose choruses are so contrived throughout this play as to afford a relief and contrast to the vulgar acrimony of the dialogue;

---

* The allusions in these lines relate to some incidents not recorded in history, some artifice by which Cleon had succeeded in deluding and disappointing the party; the country people in particular (long excluded from the enjoyment of their property) who were anxious for peace.

not in their logical and grammatical sense, but in their form and rhythm, and in the selection of the words, which if heard imperfectly, would appear to belong to a grave or tender or beautiful subject." If the occasion had admitted of it, this observation might have been applied more particularly to the first lines of each chorus ; for we may remark instances in which the contrast of grave or graceful lines at the commencement was intended to give additional force to the vehemence of invective immediately following in the chorus itself. Thus, in the original of the chorus which is given above, an expression of wonder and awe* is conveyed to the ear by the mere rhythm of the first line, independent of, and in fact contradictory to, the sense of the words themselves, a kind of contrast which appeared unattainable in the English language. What could not, therefore, be accomplished by "form and rhythm" has in this instance been attempted by "the selection of words." But justificatory criticism has already been renounced, as absurd and tiresome. This note had been begun solely for the purpose of bringing under the notice of the reader, with due modification, the observation, somewhat too largely expressed, in the review above mentioned.

CHORUS.

Even in your tender years,
And your early disposition,
You betrayed an inward sense
Of the conscious impudence,
Which constitutes a politician.
Hence you squeeze and drain alone the rich milch kine of our allies ;
Whilst the son of Hippodamus licks his lips with longing eyes.
But now, with eager rapture we behold
A mighty miscreant of baser mould!
A more consummate ruffian !
An energetic ardent ragamuffin !
Behold him there! He stands before your eyes,

* O altitudo!

To bear you down, with a superior frown,
A fiercer stare,
And more incessant and exhaustless lies.

The metre of the lines which follow, namely, the tetrameter-iambic, is so essentially base and vulgar that no English song afforded a specimen fit to be quoted, and the songs themselves were not proper to be mentioned; at last, Mr. Cornewall Lewis, whose kind importunities had extorted the publication of the preceding play of "The Acharnians," suggested as a produceable specimen the first line of a sufficiently vulgar but otherwise inoffensive song—

"A captain bold of Halifax, who lived in country quarters."

It would not be right that Mr. Lewis's name should be mentioned here without an acknowledgment of the obligations due to him, for his friendly zeal in forwarding that play through the press, and correcting some inaccuracies incidental to the work of a very unsystematic scholar.

The metre, of which so derogatory a character has been given, is always appropriated in the comedies of Aristophanes, to those scenes of argumentative altercation in which the ascendency is given to the more ignoble character; in this respect it stands in decided contrast with the anapæstic measure.

IAMBIC TETRAMETER.

CHOR. [*to the* SAUSAGE-SELLER].

Now then do you, that boast a birth, from whence you might inherit,
And from your breeding have derived a manhood and a spirit,
Unbroken by the rules of art, untamed by education,
Show forth the native impudence and vigour of the nation!

S. S. Well; if you like, then, I'll describe the nature of him clearly,
The kind of rogue I've known him for.

CLEON. My friend, you're somewhat early.
First give *me* leave to speak.

S. S. I won't, by Jove! Aye. You may bellow!
I'll make you know, before I go, that I'm the baser fellow.

CHOR. Aye! stand to that! Stick to the point; and for a further glory,
Say that your family were base, time out mind before ye.

CLEON. Let me speak first!

S. S. I won't.

CLEON. You shall, by Jove!

S. S. I won't, by Jove, though!

CLEON. By Jupiter, I shall burst with rage!

S. S. No matter, I'll prevent you.

CHOR. No; don't prevent, for Heaven's sake! Don't hinder him from bursting.

CLEON. What means—what ground of hope have you —to dare to speak against me?

S. S. What! I can speak! and I can chop garlic and lard and logic.

CLEON. Aye! You're a speaker, I suppose! I should enjoy to see you,
Like a pert scullion set to cook—to see your talents fairly
Put to the test, with hot blood-raw disjointed news arriving,*
Obliged to hash and season it, and dish it in an instant.
You're like the rest of 'em—the swarm of paltry weak pretenders.
You've made your pretty speech perhaps, and gained a little lawsuit
Against a merchant foreigner, by dint of water-drinking,
And lying long awake o' nights, composing and repeating,
And studying as you walked the streets, and wearing out the patience
Of all your friends and intimates, with practising beforehand:
And now you wonder at yourself, elated and delighted
At your own talent for debate—you silly saucy coxcomb.

. . . .

* When the character of the debate is suddenly changed by the receipt of unexpected intelligence.

S. S. What's your own diet? How do you contrive to keep the city
Passive and hushed—What kind of drink drives ye to that presumption?

CLEON. Why mention any man besides, that's capable to match me;
That after a sound hearty meal of tunny-fish and cutlets,
Can quaff my gallon; and at once, without premeditation,
With slang and jabber overpower the generals at Pylos.*

S. S. But I can eat my paunch of pork, my liver and my haslets,
And scoop the sauce with both my hands; and with my dirty fingers
I'll seize old Nicias by the throat, and choke the grand debaters.

CHOR. We like your scheme in some respects; but still that style of feeding,
Keeping the sauce all to yourself, appears a gross proceeding.

CLEON. But I can domineer and dine on mullets at Miletus.

S. S. And I can eat my shins of beef, and farm the mines of silver.

CLEON. I'll burst into the Council House, and storm and blow and bluster.

S. S. I'll blow the wind into your tail, and kick you like a bladder.

CLEON. I'll tie you neck and heels at once, and kick ye to the kennel.

CHOR. Begin with us then! Try your skill!—kicking us all together!

CLEON. I'll have ye pilloried in a trice.

S. S. I'll have you tried for cowardice.

---

* See Mitford, ch. xv., sect. 10, p. 293.

CLEON. I'll tan your hide to cover seats.
S. S. Yours shall be made a purse for cheats.
The luckiest skin* that could be found.
CLEON. Dog I'll pin you to the ground
With ten thousand tenter-hooks.
S. S. I'll equip you for the cooks,
Neatly prepared, with skewers and lard.
CLEON. I'll pluck your eyebrows off, I will.
S. S. I'll cut your collops out, I will.

It is evident that a scuffle or wrestling match takes place here between the two rivals. It continues during the verses of Demosthenes and those of the Chorus, the last of which mark that the Sausage-seller has the advantage; and the Sausage-seller's speech of four lines which follows, implies that he is at the same time exhibiting his adversary in a helpless posture.

It is to be observed that the palæstra was not a mere school of wrestling or boxing. The attention of the masters of the palæstra, like the dancing-masters of former times in France and England, was directed to form their pupils to a general dignity and elegance of carriage.

Hence all awkward or indecent effort was disallowed in the palæstra of the better educated class. But, as wrestling was a universal national exercise, it would of course be practised vulgarly amongst the vulgar, and there would be many tricks and casts retained and practised by the lowest class which were rejected by the more dignified palæstra. The Sausage-seller was represented as foiling his opponent by some unbecoming unsightly effort which was characteristic of a town blackguard. Thus the scuffle between them formed a kind of dumb show, analogous to, and illustrative of the dialogue; exhibiting in the triumph of the Sausage-seller the peculiar advantages reserved for superior impudence and vulgarity both in word and deed.

DEMOSTHENES.

Yes, by Jove! and like a swine,
Dangling at the butcher's door,

* It is well known that purses made from the skins of different animals are more or less lucky. Among ourselves the skin of a weasel, or of a *black* cat, is esteemed the most universally lucky.

Dress him cleanly, neat and fine,
Washed and scalded o'er and o'er;
Strutting out in all his pride,
With his carcase open wide,
And a skewer in either side;
While the cook, with keen intent,
By the steady rules of art,
Scrutinizes every part,
The tongue, the throat, the maw, the vent.

CHORUS.

Some element may prove more fierce than fire!
Some viler scoundrel may be seen,
Than ever yet has been!
And many a speech hereafter, many a word,
More villainous, than ever yet was heard.
We marvel at thy prowess and admire!
Therefore proceed!
In word and deed,
Be firm and bold,
Keep steadfast hold!

Only keep your hold upon him. Persevere as you began;
He'll be daunted and subdued; I know the nature of the man.

S. S. Such as here you now behold him, all his life has he been known.
Till he reaped a reputation, in a harvest not his own;
Now he shows the sheaves* at home, that he clandestinely conveyed,
Tied and bound and heaped together, till his bargain can be made.

---

* The Spartan prisoners taken at Pylos, and kept in the most severe confinement.

CLEON. [*released and recovering himself*].
I'm at ease, I need not fear ye, with the Senate on my side,
And the Commons all dejected, humble, poor, and stupefied

CHORUS.

Mark his visage! and behold,
How brazen, unabashed, and bold!
How the colour keeps its place
In his face!

CLEON. Let me be the vilest thing, the mattress that Cratinus* stains;
Or be forced to learn to sing, Morsimus's † tragic strains;
If I don't despise and loath, scorn and execrate ye both.

CHORUS.

Active, eager, airy thing!
Ever hovering on the wing,
Ever hovering and discovering
Golden sweet secreted honey,
Nature's mintage and her money.
May thy maw be purged and scoured,
From the gobbets it devoured;
By the emetic drench of law!
With the cheerful ancient saw,
Then we shall rejoice and sing,
Chanting out with hearty glee,
"Fill a bumper merrily,
For the merry news I bring!"
But he, the shrewd and venerable
Manciple‡ of the public table,

---

* The famous comic poet, now grown old; and infirm, as it appears.
† Ridiculed elsewhere as a bad writer of tragedy. See "The Peace," v. 803.
‡ The old butler and steward of the Prytaneum, who had hitherto been used to well-bred company and civil treatment, would be overjoyed at his deliverance from such a guest as Cleon.

Will chant and chuckle and rejoice,
With heart and voice.

CLEON. May I never eat a slice, at any public sacrifice,
If your effrontery and pretence, shall daunt my steadfast impudence.

S. S. Then, by the memory which I value, of all the bastings in our alley,
When from the dog butcher's tray I stole the lumps of meat away.
I trust to match you with a feat, and do credit to my meat,
Credit to my meat and feeding, and my bringing up and breeding.

CLEON. Dog's meat! What a dog art thou! But I shall dog thee fast enow.

[CLEON *pays no attention to the short dialogue which follows between the* SAUSAGE-SELLER *and the* CHORUS. *The actor's part was in dumb show, exhibiting a mimicry of the Demagogue's usual gesture and deportment, when exciting himself in preparation for a vehement burst of oratory.*]

S. S. Then, there were other petty tricks, I practised as a child;
Haunting about the butchers' shops, the weather being mild.
"See, boys," says I, "the swallow there! Why summer's come I say,"
And when they turned to gape and stare, I snatched a steak away.

CHOR. A clever lad you must have been, you managed matters rarely,
To steal at such an early day, so seasonably and fairly.

S. S. But if by chance they spied it, I contrived to hide it handily;
Clapping it in between my hams, tight and close and even;
Calling on all the powers above, and all the gods in heaven;

And there I stood, and made it good, with staring and forswearing.
So that a statesman of the time, a speaker shrewd and witty,
Was heard to say, "That boy one day will surely rule the city."

CHOR. 'Twas fairly guessed, by the true test, by your address and daring,
First in stealing, then concealing, and again in swearing.

CLEON. I'll settle ye! Yes, both of ye! the storm of elocution
Is rising here within my breast, to drive you to confusion,
And with a wild commotion, overwhelm the land and ocean.

S. S. Then I shall hand my sausages, and reef 'em close and tight,
And steer away before the wind, and run you out of sight.

DEM. And I shall go, to the hold below, to see that all is right. [*Exit.*

CLEON. By the holy goddess I declare,
Rogue and robber as you are,
I'll not brook it, or overlook it;
The public treasure that you stole,
I'll force you to refund the whole . . . .

CHOR. (Keep near and by—the gale grows high.)

CLEON. [*in continuation*]
. . . . Ten talents, I could prove it here,
Were sent to you from Potidea.

S. S. Well, will you take a single one
To stop your bawling and have done?

CHOR. Yes, I'll be bound—he'll compound,
And take a share—the wind grows fair.
This hurricane will overblow,
Fill the sails and let her go!

CLEON. I'll indict ye, I'll impeach,
I'll denounce ye in a speech;
With four several accusations,
For your former peculations,
Of a hundred talents each.

S. S. But I'll denounce ye,
And I'll trounce ye,
With accusations half a score;
Half a score, for having left
Your rank in the army; and for theft
I'll charge ye with a thousand more.

CLEON. I'll rummage out your pedigree,
And prove that all your ancestry
Were sacrilegious and accurst.*

S. S. I'll prove the same of yours; and first
The foulest treasons and the worst—
Their deep contrivance to conceal
Plots against the common weal;
Which I shall publish and declare—
Publish, and depose, and swear.

CLEON. Plots, concealed and hidden! Where?

S. S. Where? Where plots have always tried
To hide themselves—beneath a hide!

CLEON. Go for a paltry vulgar slave.

S. S. Get out for a designing knave.

CHOR. Give him back the cuff you got!

CLEON. Murder! help! a plot! a plot!
I'm assaulted and beset!

CHOR. Strike him harder! harder yet!
Pelt him,—rap him,
Slash him,—slap him,
Across the chops there, with a wipe

---

* Many of the first families were involved in the guilt of a sacrilegious massacre, committed nearly 200 years before. See Mr. Clinton's "Fasti Olymp." 40.

Of your entrails and your tripe !*
Keep him down—the day's your own.

O cleverest of human kind ! the stoutest and the boldest,
The saviour of the State, and us, the friends that thou beholdest;
No words can speak our gratitude ; all praise appears too little.
You've fairly done the rascal up, you've nicked him to a tittle.

CLEON. By the holy goddess, it's not new to me
This scheme of yours. I've known the job long since,
The measurement and the scantling of it all,
And where it was shaped out and tacked together.

CHOR. Aye! There it is! You must exert yourself ; †
Come, try to match him again with a carpenter's phrase.

S. S. Does he think I have not tracked him in his intrigues
At Argos?—his pretence to make a treaty
With the people there?—and all his private parley
With the Spartans?—There he works and blows the coals;
And has plenty of other irons in the fire.

CHOR. Well done, the blacksmith beats the carpenter.†

S. S. [*in continuation*]
And the envoys that come here, are all in a tale ;
All beating time to the same tune. I tell ye,
It's neither gold nor silver, nor the promises,
Nor the messages you send me by your friends,
That will ever serve your turn ; or hinder me
From bringing all these facts before the public.

CLEON. Then, I'll set off this instant to the Senate ;
To inform them of your conspiracies and treasons,
Your secret nightly assemblies and cabals,

---

* A slap on the face of this kind is proverbial, in Spain, as the most outrageous of all insults.

† In these passages, the poet marks the degradation of public oratory, infected with vulgar jargon and low metaphors.

Your private treaty with the king of Persia,
Your correspondence with Bœotia,
And the business that you keep there in the cheese-press,
Close packed you think, and ripening out of sight.

S. S. Ah! cheese? Is cheese any cheaper there, d'ye hear?

CLEON. By Hercules! I'll have ye crucified!

[*Exit* CLEON.

CHORUS *to the* S. S.

Well, how do you feel your heart and spirits now?
Rouse up your powers! If ever in your youth
You swindled and forswore as you profess;
The time is come to show it. Now this instant
He's hurrying headlong to the Senate House;
To tumble amongst them like a thunderbolt;
To accuse us all, to rage, and storm, and rave.

S. S. Well, I'll be off then. But these guts and pudding,
I must put them by the while, and the chopping knife.

CHOR. Here take this lump of lard, to 'noint your neck with;
The grease will give him the less hold upon you,
With the gripe of his accusations.

S. S. That's well thought of.

CHOR. And here's the garlic. Swallow it down!

S. S. What for?

CHOR. It will prime you up,* and make you fight the better.
Make haste!

S. S. Why, so I do.

CHOR. Remember now—
Show blood and game. Drive at him and denounce him!
Dash at his comb, his coxcomb, cuff it soundly!

---

* Game-cocks are dieted with garlic, see "Acharnians," p. 21, Theorus's warning to Dicæopolis, where a similar note should have been given.

Peck, scratch, and tear, conculcate, clapperclaw!
Bite both his wattles off, and gobble 'em up!
And then return in glory to your friends.

[*Exit* S. S.

CHORUS.

Well may you speed
In word and deed.
May all the powers of the market-place
Grant ye protection, and help, and grace,
With strength of lungs and front and brain;
With a crown of renown, to return again.
[*turning to the audience*]
But you that have heard and applauded us here,
In every style and in every way,
Grant us an ear, and attend for a while,
To the usual old anapæstic essay.

The following Parabasis has been already noticed (p. 44 of "The Acharnians") in the long preliminary notice prefixed to the Parabasis of that play; but the inference which is there so concisely assumed in the foot-note, will be better and more conveniently estimated, when placed in juxtaposition with the composition itself. It has been said, in brief and strong terms, that the poet had become the *poetical serf of the community*. Our knowledge of antiquity is too scanty, to enable us to define precisely the mode and degree of this vassalage, to which he thus voluntarily subjected himself; but it is evident, that by demanding (as the text has it) *a chorus for himself*, he was in effect doing that which is expressed in the translation, namely, *embracing a profession*, from which he could not retreat. The whole tenor of the following Parabasis turns upon the decisive and irretrievable step, which the poet (after long hesitation, and resisting the importunity of his friends) had at length determined to take, undeterred by the discouraging example of his predecessors in the same line, whom he enumerates and describes, devoting himself irrevocably and exclusively to the composition of comedy.

Yet the poet was already publicly known as the author of three comedies; "The Daitaleis," in which he had exhibited the contrast of two young men, brothers: the one, steady and manly, according to the old fashion, instructed in the old music and poetry, addicted to

gymnastic exercises, living with his father in the country, a lover of hunting and rural sports; the other, a thoroughly depraved town rake—a scamp of that new school, of which Alcibiades was the patron and the model; aspiring to distinguish himself by foppery, litigation, and speechifying. That excellent comedy of Gresset's, "Le Méchant," may be considered as somewhat analogous to this—produced with the same intention, and in a state of society and manners not altogether dissimilar.

His second play, "The Babylonians," has been already mentioned (see "Acharnians," p. 44); of this he was avowedly the author, and had been held responsible for it, as we have already seen.

"The Acharnians," his third play, is generally speaking a comic pleading in favour of peace; but it includes a justification of the poet as the author of the preceding play (distinctly and palpably in the Parabasis, and in a burlesque form in other parts); for Dicæopolis in his defence before the Chorus is the representative of the poet himself; and that portion of the Chorus, which continues inveterate and unappeased, bring an accusation against him, which has no reference to anything which has occurred in the preceding scenes of the same play; but which is distinctly applicable to the main purport and argument of "The Babylonians" *—(see "Acharnians," p. 40)—

"Inveighing against informers."

The original, more scrupulously translated, would stand thus—*abusing any man that happened to be an informer*, an offence, of which the Dicæopolis of "The Acharnians" (for the informer Nicarchus has not yet appeared) had been, up to this point at least, entirely guiltless. Dicæopolis then, in this instance, is a burlesque representative of the poet himself, put upon his trial for misdemeanours perpetrated in a former play. His adversaries attack him, for having stigmatized individuals as informers. The party who are become favourable to him, justify him, by affirming the truth and correctness of all his imputations. The reply to this is, that though they might be true, he had no right to give publicity to scandalous and offensive truths; and that he deserves to be punished for it. There is nothing in this altercation, which can in any way be made to bear the slightest reference to anything that had occurred in the preceding scenes of the play itself.

We have made a wide digression in our way to a very unsatisfactory conclusion. It may be said: we see very clearly, from what has

* It is noticed as having contained attacks upon a great number of persons.

been already stated, that Aristophanes was already an avowed writer for the comic theatre; regarded as responsible for his productions, when they were deemed objectionable; justifying them himself in person in the first instance, and afterwards under a feigned character, in a subsequent drama. What then was the change in his condition and prospects which was produced by *demanding a chorus for himself?* a term as it appears of great import; implying a devotion of himself exclusively to the task of writing for the stage. What were the emoluments and privileges attached to this profession of a comic author, thus authentically assumed? What, on the other hand, were the disadvantages and disabilities, by which those privileges and emoluments were counterbalanced? This is a question, of which the learning and industry of continental scholars may perhaps procure a solution, if they have not already afforded it, to those who are conversant in the language and literature of Germany. But something in the meanwhile may be deduced from the testimony of the poet himself. It appears from the scene of Euripides in "The Acharnians," that the author must have been entitled to the dresses of the actors; and his perquisites probably extended to the other properties (as they are called) of the stage: with the exception of those which were permanent and immovable. We find the poet thus speaking of himself in the Parabasis of "The Peace," contrasting his own conduct with that of other cotemporary comic authors—he says (v. 763):

> "On former occasions he never made use
> Of the credit he gained, to corrupt and seduce;
> *But packed up his alls*, after gaining the day,
> Contented and joyous, and so went away."

We find, moreover, that the comic poets received a salary from the State; for in the play of "The Frogs," exhibited almost at the close of the war, at a time of great pecuniary difficulty, it seems that their pay was reduced. And the poet introduces his Chorus of happy spirits in the Elysian fields, excommunicating the economists—in company with other reprobates and profane persons who are warned to withdraw from the sacred rites:—they include, in their interdict,

> "All *statesmen* retrenching the *fees and the salaries*
> Of *theatrical bards* in revenge for the railleries
> And jests and lampoons of this holy solemnity."

This appears evidently not to have been serious; or if serious, would have been very unreasonable; for the retrenchment at that period was universal, extending even to the omnipotent jurymen, who were reduced from a daily pay of three oboli, to two. Whatever the

retrenchment may have been, it seems, as is suggested above, not to have been one which was seriously complained of; and we may safely infer, from the general munificence of the Athenians in all matters of art, and from their peculiar passion for the theatre, that in better and more prosperous times the allowances made to the comic poets must have been sufficiently liberal—at least to the three successful competitors; for there were three dramatic prizes, assigned to the first, second, and third best play; a circumstance, which of itself implies a considerable pecuniary recompense; for the third, the least of all, must have been worth having in a pecuniary view; otherwise, to be ranked as a third-rate poet would have been felt as an unqualified mortification. Supposing the prizes to have been merely honorary, no third prize could have existed; for it could never have been considered as an honour.

From the question of emoluments we may turn to that of privileges and immunities: and here, in the absence of positive authority, we may be contented for the present with general inferences and analogy. According to the notions of heathen antiquity, a professed comic poet would have been considered as a person devoted to the service of Bacchus; a certain character of inviolability must therefore have been attached to him, in common with other persons separated and set apart from the common concerns of the State, and dedicated for life to the service of any other deity. Though modified no doubt in later times, this principle was essentially inherent in the Grecian mind. The slaughter of a poet, "a servant of the Muses," was condemned as an act of sacrilege; and it was in these terms, that the assassin of Archilochus was excommunicated by the Oracle, and expelled from the temple, which he had presumed to enter. It is not conceivable, that these feelings, however modified, could have been altogether extinct, in the times of which we are now treating; and it is a singular fact, considering the enormous outrages and attacks upon private character, perpetrated by the comic poets, that (with the exception of the exploded fable of the death of Eupolis) there is no trace to be met with of any personal vengeance directed against any of them. The comic poets have been spoken of above, as persons separate and set apart from the ordinary concerns of the State; and so they must have been, either by positive law, or by established and authoritative custom; for it is not to be supposed, that to any man standing in all other respects upon an equal footing with his fellow-citizens, the privilege should have been allowed of assailing them with unlimited ribaldry and abuse. Whatever may be thought of such a privilege in modern times, it was certainly not consonant to the spirit of antiquity, to allow it to

be enjoyed by any individual, unaccompanied with corresponding disabilities. The office of a comic poet, during the reign of the Athenian democracy, has not been unaptly compared to that of the court jester during the Middle Ages. They were both of them authorized to take the most extraordinary liberties, in reflections on the sovereign, and the highest persons in the State; but theirs was a situation obviously incompatible with the exercise of any other office or privilege. The parallel may be carried further; for it would appear, from many recorded instances, that of these royal jesters many must have been men, not only of a lively fancy and imagination, but of just feelings and a sound judgment, whose privileged sallies occasionally directed the attention of the sovereign to truths which could not have been conveyed to him by any other channel. Aristophanes was certainly a most judicious though ineffectual adviser to the multitudinous sovereign, whom it was his office to amuse; and Charles of Burgundy might have lived and died in prosperity, if his counsels had been moderated by the sarcasms of his jester.

But to return to our subject: thus far, in the absence of direct and positive information, an attempt has been made, by conjecture and inference, to define the new position in which the poet was placing himself, as a member of the community to which he belonged; whether in this respect he had any reason to repent of his resolution, it would be idle and superfluous to risk any conjecture; but in regard to his success as an author, the forebodings expressed in the Parabasis appear to have been verified. Up to this time, while unengaged and at liberty, he had been courted by the public, and indulged with applause and success; for the strong feeling excited in the public by his play of "The Babylonians," at first hostile, and gradually (like their representatives the Chorus of Acharnians) subsiding into acquiescence and approbation, must have been felt as more than an equivalent to the highest theatrical success. But he was now irrevocably engaged in the service of the public: the first prize, as a kind of premium for enlisting, was awarded to the present play, the first which he exhibited as a regular writer for the stage; but from this time he was destined, like his predecessors, to experience the rigours and caprices of theatrical discipline. His next play was "The Clouds," in which, following up the design of "The Daitaleis," he had traced to its source that sudden change in morality and manners, of which the outward manifestations had been exhibited in the former play. This play of "The Clouds," which he affirms (adjuring Bacchus as the patron deity of theatrical poets) to have been the best that ever was written, was rejected. The play of

"The Wasps," in which he thus asserted the merit of "The Clouds," was acted in the following year, and obtained the first prize. But we find that another mortification had in the meanwhile befallen him, in the diminished zeal and ardour of his friends—he had been, as the phrase is, "*had up*" by Cleon before the Senate, and subjected to the infliction of a severe invective; during which time, he complains, that his friends and partizans who were in attendance, and upon whose countenance be depended, "had shown themselves indifferent and even amused." They imagined, no doubt, that being once engaged, he must go on. But he tells them, that he does not mean to compromise himself to the same extent in future; and reminds them of the fable of the vine, which being left unsupported, ceased to produce fruit (v. 1291):

"So (the story says) the stake deserted and betrayed the vine."

Here then we trace a turn in the poet's mind; he became less of a public personage: and though his fancy and wit remained the same, and his principles continued unchanged; and though his courage and spirit occasionally broke forth in public emergencies, yet having adopted the stage as his occupation, he approached more nearly to the common standard of theatrical writers; and he might have made the same complaint, which was uttered by Shakespeare:

"So that almost my nature is subdued
To what it deals in, like the dyer's hand."

But the text is already too much clogged with this long interpolation of prose. We will not stop, therefore, to lament over the loss of "The Daitaleis" and "The Babylonians," composed at an earlier period, and with an unbroken spirit.

But the money-loving spirit of our age manifests itself even in our literary researches, and we cannot refrain, even with respect to an ancient poet who lived 2300 years ago, from the invariable inquiry —*What was he worth?* It may be inferred then, from grounds of presumption too long to be detailed here, that he must have belonged to the class of the knights. Now the knights were rated (according to the modus fixed by Solon) at an amount of 300 bushels of corn. But how rated? As for the sum total of their income? Or as being that portion of it, which in cases of emergency was exigible for the service of the State? Those students of antiquity, who are not endowed with the faculty of digesting gross absurdities, are under great obligations to Mr. Boeck, for having relieved them from the cruel necessity of being constrained to believe, that a man with £75 a year (taking corn at five shillings a bushel) was bound to keep a war-horse, and to serve in the cavalry at his own expense; or that

another with an income of £225 (estimated according to the same permanent standard of value) could have been charged with the expenses of a ship of war—a proposition, we conceive, wholly contradictory to the experience of the members of the Yacht Club. Mr. Boeck has shown, that these sums were the extreme rates of taxation to which the individuals of these classes were subject; a rate which was not always exacted in full; and which we may suppose, at the utmost, to have been a double tithe, or four shillings in the pound, a rate of taxation to which, in difficult times, our own country was contented to submit. The elucidation of this point is by far the greatest service which Mr. Boeck has rendered to ancient literature, in the whole of his accurate and learned work. To have dissipated these misapprehensions, which, as long as they were implicitly adopted, diffused an air of utter incredibility and unreality over the whole system of antiquity, is a result far more important than the development of details hitherto unknown and unexamined.

This discussion, already too long, has been prolonged thus far for the sake of restating Mr. Boeck's discovery; which has been unaccountably overlooked in a recent publication.

With respect to the poet, we may safely conclude, that he was in tolerably easy circumstances; and we find accordingly that he was able to give away some of his plays with their contingent emoluments: among the rest the very play ("The Frogs") in which he complained of the new retrenchment, and denounced an anathema against the economists.

PARABASIS.

If a veteran author had wished to engage
Our assistance to-day, for a speech from the stage;
We scarce should have granted so bold a request;
But this author of ours, as the bravest and best,
Deserves an indulgence denied to the rest.
For the courage and vigour, the scorn and the hate,
With which he encounters the pests of the State;
A thorough-bred seaman, intrepid and warm,
Steering outright, in the face of the storm.

But now for the gentle reproaches he bore
On the part of his friends, for refraining before
To embrace the profession, embarking for life
In theatrical storms and poetical strife.

He begs us to state, that for reasons of weight,
He has lingered so long, and determined so late.
For he deemed the achievements of comedy hard,
The boldest attempt of a desperate bard!
The Muse he perceived was capricious and coy,
Though many were courting her few could enjoy.
And he saw without reason, from season to season,
Your humour would shift, and turn poets adrift,
Requiting old friends with unkindness and treason,
Discarded in scorn as exhausted and worn.
Seeing Magnes's fate, who was reckoned of late
For the conduct of comedy captain and head;
That so oft on the stage, in the flower of his age,
Had defeated the Chorus his rivals had led;
With his sounds of all sort, that were uttered in sport,
With whims and vagaries unheard of before,
With feathers and wings, and a thousand gay things,
That in frolicsome fancies his Choruses wore—
When his humour was spent, did your temper relent,
To requite the delight that he gave you before?
We beheld him displaced, and expelled and disgraced,
When his hair and his wit were grown aged and hoar.
Then he saw, for a sample, the dismal example
Of noble Cratinus so splendid and ample,
Full of spirit and blood, and enlarged like a flood;
Whose copious current tore down with its torrent,
Oaks, ashes and yew, with the ground where they grew,
And his rivals to boot, wrenched up by the root;
And his personal foes, who presumed to oppose,
All drowned and abolished, dispersed and demolished,
And drifted headlong, with a deluge of song.
And his airs and his tunes, and his songs and lampoons,
Were recited and sung, by the old and the young—
At our feasts and carousals what poet but he?
And "The fair Amphibribe" and "The Sycophant Tree,"

"Masters and masons and builders of verse!"—
Those were the tunes that all tongues could rehearse;
But since in decay, you have cast him away,
Stript of his stops and his musical strings,
Battered and shattered, a broken old instrument,
Shoved out of sight among rubbishy things.
 His garlands are faded, and what he deems worst,
His tongue and his palate are parching with thirst;
 And now you may meet him alone in the street,
Wearied and worn, tattered and torn,
All decayed and forlorn, in his person and dress;
 Whom his former success should exempt from distress.
With subsistence at large, at the general charge,
And a seat with the great, at the table of state,*
There to feast every day, and preside at the play
In splendid apparel, triumphant and gay.
 Seeing Crates the next, always teased and perplexed,
With your tyrannous temper tormented and vexed;
That with taste and good sense, without waste or expense,
From his snug little hoard, provided your board,
With a delicate treat, economic and neat.
 Thus hitting or missing, with crowns or with hissing,
Year after year, he pursued his career,
For better or worse, till he finished his course.
 These precedents held him in long hesitation;
He replied to his friends, with a just observation,
"That a seaman in regular order is bred,
To the oar, to the helm, and to look out ahead;
With diligent practice has fixed in his mind
The signs of the weather, and changes of wind.
And when every point of the service is known,
Undertakes the command of a ship of his own."

---

* The Prytaneum.

For reasons like these,
If your judgment agrees,
That he did not embark,
Like an ignorant spark,
Or a troublesome lout,
To puzzle and bother, and blunder about,
Give him a shout,
At his first setting out!
And all pull away
With a hearty huzza
For success to the play!
Send him away,
Smiling and gay,
Shining and florid,
With his bald forehead!

The text contains nearly all that is known of two of the three poets here mentioned, Magnes and Crates; the last is recorded, as having become distinguished in the second year of the 82 Olymp., thirty-six years before the exhibition of "The Knights": Magnes must have been older. Of Cratinus some few fragments are still in existence: he lived to vindicate himself from the offensive commiseration here bestowed him, by gaining the first prize in the next year, when the comedy of "The Clouds" was rejected.

STROPHE.

Neptune, lord of land and deep,
From the lofty Sunian steep,
With delight surveying
The fiery-footed steeds,
Frolicking and neighing
As their humour leads—
And rapid cars contending
Venturous and forward,
Where splendid youths are spending
The money that they borrowed.
Thence downward to the ocean,

And the calmer show
Of the dolphin's motion
In the depths below;
And the glittering galleys
Gallantly that steer,
When the squadron sallies,
With wages in arrear.
List, O list!
Listen and assist,
Thy Chorus here!
Mighty Saturn's son!
The support of Phormion,*
In his victories of late;
To the fair Athenian State
More propitious far,
Than all the gods that are,
In the present war.

EPIRREMA.

Let us praise our famous fathers, let their glory be recorded
On Minerva's mighty mantle† consecrated and embroidered.
That with many a naval action and with infantry by land,
Still contending, never ending, strove for empire and command.
When they met the foe, disdaining to compute a poor account
Of the number of their armies, of their muster and amount:

---

* A most able and successful naval commander.

† This mantle was an enormous piece of tapestry adorned with the actions and figures of the naval heroes and protecting deities. It was renewed every year; and was carried to the temple, at the Panathenaic procession, suspended and displayed from a tall mast fixed on a movable carriage. See Mr. Wordsworth's "Attica," p. 184.

But whene'er at wrestling matches * they were worsted in the fray;
Wiped their shoulders from the dust, denied the fall, and fought away.
Then the generals † never claimed precedence, or a separate seat,
Like the present mighty captains; or the public wine or meat.
As for us, the sole pretension suited to our birth and years,
Is with resolute intention, as determined volunteers,
To defend our fields and altars, as our fathers did before;
Claiming as a recompense this easy boon, and nothing more:
When our trials with peace are ended, not to view us with malignity;
When we're curried, sleek and pampered, prancing in our pride and dignity.

ANTISTROPHE.

It will be seen that there is a want of correspondence and proportion between the strophe and antistrophe; the first has been enlarged, to give scope for the development of the poetic imagery, tinged with burlesque, which appears in the original. In atonement for this irregularity, the antistrophe, which offered no such temptation, is given as an exact *metrical facsimile* of the orignal. In this respect, it may at least have some merit as a curiosity. The only variation consists in a triple, instead of a double, rhyme.

Mighty Minerva! thy command
Rules and upholds this happy land;
Attica, famed in every part,
With a renown for arms and art,

---

* Thirty-two years before this time, the Athenians, after being toiled in a great battle at Tanagra, risked another general action at Oinophuta, in which they were victorious, only sixty-two days after the first!—"Fasti Hellenici," Ol. 81.

† Tolmides and Myronides, who commanded in the battles here alluded to.

Noted among the nations.
Victory bring—the bard's delight;
She that in faction or in fight,
Aids us on all occasions.
Goddess, list to the song! Bring her away with thee,
Haste and bring her along! Here to the play with thee.
Bring fair Victory down for us!
Bring her here with a crown for us!
Come with speed, as a friend indeed,
Now or never at our need!

Antepirrema.

It is observable, that the antepirrema is generally in a lower and less serious tone than its preceding epirrema; as if the poet were, or thought it right to appear, apprehensive of having been over-earnest in his first address. In the present instance, as the poetical advocate of his party, he had already stated their claims to public confidence and favour; and, in the concluding lines, had deprecated the jealousy and envy to which they were exposed. He now wishes to give a striking instance of their spirit and alacrity in the service of the country; and it is given accordingly, in the most uninvidious manner, in a tone of extravagant burlesque humour.

Let us sing the mighty deeds of our illustrious noble steeds.
They deserve a celebration for their service heretofore,
Charges and attacks, exploits enacted in the days of yore:
These, however, strike me less, as having been performed ashore.
But the wonder was to see them, when they fairly went aboard,
With canteens and bread and onions, victualled and completely stored,
Then they fixed and dipped their oars beginning all to shout and neigh,
Just the same as human creatures, "Pull away, boys! Pull away!"

"Bear a hand there, Roan and Sorrel! Have a care there, Black and Bay!
Then they leapt ashore at Corinth; and the lustier younger sort
Strolled about to pick up litter,* for their solace and disport:
And devoured the crabs of Corinth, as a substitute for clover.
So that a poetic Crabbe,† exclaimed in anguish "All is over!
What awaits us, mighty Neptune, if we cannot hope to keep
From pursuit and persecution in the land or in the deep."

The poet Carkinus (Crab) had produced a tragedy, on the subject of the daughter of a king of Corinth; who merely, from bathing in the sea, had become unconsciously pregnant by Neptune. The lines here quoted from it were a complaint of the impossibility of preserving the honour of illustrious families from the licentious aggressions of the gods.

CHOR. [*to the* SAUSAGE-SELLER].
O best of men! thou tightest heartiest fellow!
What a terror and alarm had you created
In the hearts of all your friends by this delay.
But since at length in safety you return,
Say what was the result of your attempt.
S. S. The result is; you may call me Nickoboulus;
For I've nicked the Boule there, the Senate, capitally.

CHORUS.

Then we may chant amain
In an exulting strain,

* The usual licentious excesses of an invading army.
† The poet Carkinus.

With ecstasy triumphant bold and high,
O thou!
That not in words alone, or subtle thought,
But more in manly deed,
Hast merited, and to fair achievement brought!
Relate at length and tell
The event as it befell:
So would I gladly pass a weary way;
Nor weary would it seem,
Attending to the theme,
Of all the glories of this happy day.

[*In a familiar tone, as if clapping him on the shoulder.*]

*Come, my jolly worthy fellow, never fear!
We're all delighted with you—let us hear!

S. S. Aye, aye—It's well worth hearing, I can tell ye:
I followed after him to the Senate House;
And there was he, storming, and roaring, driving
His thunderbolts about him, bowling down
His biggest words, to crush the cavaliers,
Like stones from a hill-top; calling them traitors,
Conspirators—what not? There sat the Senate
With their arms folded, and their eyebrows bent,
And their lips puckered, with the grave aspect
Of persons utterly humbugged and bamboozled.
Seeing the state of things, I paused awhile,
Praying in secret with an under voice:
"Ye influential impudential powers
Of sauciness and jabber, slang a d jaw!
Ye spirits of the market-place and street,
Where I was reared and bred—befriend me now!
Grant me a voluble utterance, and a vast
Unbounded voice, and steadfast impudence!"

---

* The encouragement which the poet administers, *to himself* in fact, is not out of place; he is preparing to attack the Senate, with the most contemptuous ridicule.

Whilst I thus thought and prayed, on the right hand,
I heard a sound of wind distinctly broken!
I seized the omen at once; and bouncing up,
I burst among the crowd, and bustled through,
And bolted in at the wicket, and bawled out:
"News! news! I've brought you news! the best of news!
Yes, Senators, since first the war began,
There never has been known, till now this morning,
Such a haul of pilchards." Then they smiled and seemed
All tranquillized and placid at the prospect
Of pilchards being likely to be cheap.
I then proceeded and proposed a vote
To meet the emergence secretly and suddenly:
To seize at once the trays of all the workmen,
And go with them to market to buy pilchards,
Before the price was raised. Immediately
They applauded, and sat gaping all together,
Attentive and admiring. He perceived it;
And framed a motion, suited as he thought
To the temper of the Assembly. "I move," says he,
"That on occasion of this happy news,
We should proclaim a general thanksgiving;
With a festival moreover, and a sacrifice
Of a hundred head of oxen; to the goddess."
Then seeing he meant to drive me to the wall
With his hundred oxen, I overbid him at once;
And said "two hundred," and proposed a vow,
For a thousand goats to be offered to Diana,
Whenever sprats should fall to forty a penny.
With that the Senate smiled upon me again;
And he grew stupefied and lost, and stammering;
And attempting to interrupt the current business,
Was called to order, and silenced and put down.
Then they were breaking up to buy their pilchards:

But he must needs persist, and beg for a hearing—
"For a single moment—for a messenger—
For a herald that was come from Lacedæmon,
With an offer of peace—for an audience to be given him."
But they broke out in an uproar all together:
"Peace truly! Peace forsooth! Yes, now's their time;
I warrant 'em; when pilchards are so plenty.
They've heard of it; and now they come for peace!
No! No! No peace! The war must take its course."
Than they called out to the Presidents to adjourn;
And scrambled over the railing and dispersed;
And I dashed down to the market-place headlong;
And bought up all the fennel, and bestowed it
As donative, for garnish to their pilchards,
Among the poorer class of Senators;
And they so thanked and praised me, that in short,
For twenty-pence, I've purchased and secured them.

CHORUS.

With fair event your first essay began,
Betokening a predestined happy man.
The villain now shall meet
In equal war,
A more accomplished cheat,
A viler far;
With turns and tricks more various,
More artful and nefarious.
But thou!
Bethink thee now;
Rouse up thy spirit to the next endeavour!
Our hands and hearts and will,
Both heretofore and ever,
Are with thee still.

S. S. The Paphlagonian! Here he's coming, foaming
And swelling like a breaker in the surf!

With his hobgoblin countenance and look;
For all the world as if he'd swallow me up.

Enter CLEON.

CLEON. May I perish and rot, but I'll consume and ruin ye;
I'll leave no trick, no scheme untried to do it.

S. S. It makes me laugh, it amuses one, to see him
Bluster and storm! I whistle and snap my fingers.

CLEON. By the powers of earth and heaven! and as I live!
You villain, I'll annihilate and devour ye.

S. S. Devour me! and as I live, I'll swallow ye;
And gulp ye down at a mouthful, without salt.

CLEON. I swear by the precedence, and the seat
Which I achieved at Pylos, I'll destroy ye.

S. S. Seat, precedence truly! I hope to see you,
The last amongst us in the lowest place.

CLEON. I'll clap you in jail, in the stocks—By heaven! I will.

S. S. To see it how it takes on! Barking and tearing!
What ails the creature? Does it want a sop?

CLEON. I'll claw your guts out, with these nails of mine.

S. S. I'll pare those nails of yours, from clawing victuals
At the public table.

CLEON. I'll drag you to the Assembly
This instant, and accuse ye, and have you punished.

S. S. And I'll bring accusations there against you,
Twenty for one, and worse than yours tenfold.

CLEON. Aye—my poor soul! but they won't mind ye or hear ye,
Whilst I can manage 'em and make fools of 'em.

S. S. You reckon they belong to ye, I suppose?

CLEON. Why should not they, if I feed and diet 'em?

S. S. Aye, aye, and like the liquorish greedy nurses,
You swallow ten for one yourself at least,
For every morsel the poor creatures get.

CLEON. Moreover, in doing business in the Assembly,
I have such a superior influence and command,
That I can make them close and hard and dry,
Or pass a matter easily, as I please.

S. S. Moreover, in doing business—my band,
Has the same sort of influence and command;
And plays at fast and loose, just as it pleases.

CLEON. You sha'n't insult as you did before the Senate.
Come, come, before the Assembly.

S. S. [*coolly and drily*]. Aye—yes—why not?
With all my heart! Let's go there—What should hinder us?

[*The scene is supposed to be in front of* DEMUS'S *house.*]

CLEON. My dear good Demus, do step out a moment!

S. S. My dearest little Demus, do step out!

DEM. Who's there? Keep off! What a racket are you making;
Bawling and caterwauling about the door;
To affront the house, and scandalize the neighbours.

CLEON. Come out, do see yourself, how I'm insulted.

DEM. Oh, my poor Paphlagonian! What's the matter?
Who has affronted ye?

CLEON. I'm waylaid and beaten,
By that rogue there, and the rake-helly young fellows,
All for your sake.

DEM. How so?

CLEON. Because I love you,
And court you, and wait on you, to win your favour.

DEM. And you there, sirrah! tell me what are you?

S. S.* A lover of yours, and a rival of his, this long time;

---

* Very rapidly and eagerly.

That have wished to oblige ye and serve ye in every way:
And many there are besides, good gentlefolks,
That adore ye, and wish to pay their court to ye;
But he contrives to baffle and drive them off,
In short, you're like the silly spendthrift heirs,
That keep away from civil well-bred company,
To pass their time with grooms and low companions,
Cobblers, and curriers, tanners and such like.

CLEON. And have not I merited that preference,
By my service?

S. S. In what way?

CLEON. By bringing back
The Spartan captives tied and bound from Pylos.

S. S. And would not I bring back from the cook's shop
A mess of meat that belonged to another man?

CLEON. Well, Demus, call an Assembly then directly,
To decide between us, which is your best friend;
And when you've settled it, fix and keep to him.

[*Exit* CLEON.

S. S. Ah, do! pray do decide!—but not in the Pnyx—

DEM. It must be there; it can't be anywhere else;
It's quite impossible: you must go to the Pnyx.

S. S. Oh dear! I'm lost and ruined then! the old fellow
Is sharp and clever enough in his own home;
But planted with his rump upon that rock,
He grows completely stupefied and bothered.

CHORUS.

Now you must get your words and wit, and all your tackle ready,
To make a dash, but don't be rash, be watchful, bold and steady.
You've a nimble adversary, shifting, and alert, and wary.

[*The scene changes and discovers the Pnyx with* CLEON *on the Bema, in an orational attitude.*]

ut! have a care! behold him there!
ring upon you—be ready, prepare.
. the dolphin! Haul it hard!
th it up to the peak of the yard!
with the pinnace† to serve for a guard.

ordium appears to be marked in the original by a trait of
r which it is impossible to translate or to represent by an
lent. The true version is as follows:—"I pray to the goddess
/a, my own patroness, and the protecting deity of the city;
' I stand as a meritorious statesman, in the next rank to
es,‡ Cynna and Salabaccha;§ I may be allowed to continue
in the Prytaneum, &c. &c.

seem that the three discreditable names are substituted for
of Pericles, Cymon, and Themistocles, with whom it appears
Cleon was in the habit of comparing himself; for we shall see
n the present scene he is attacked for having presumed to
himself in parallel with Themistocles.

---

rve that the change of the scene is accompanied by the idea of
nœuvre. The ancient theatres being open at top, the machinery
ed from below; so that with the help of a little imagination the
ght at such a moment be thought to resemble the deck of a ship.
oo, that as by the change of scene and its transfer to the Pnyx
ad been deprecated by the Sausage-seller) the advantage is sup-
be transferred to the less ignoble character, the metre changes
tetrameter iambic to the anapæst, as in the scenes of altercation
other comedies, where the ascendency of the noble or ignoble
e or argument, is marked by a change of the metre; though the
hich follow may perhaps be considered as an exception; for the
seller has the better even in the anapæst; but his complete triumph
ed for the tetrameter.

image is that of a merchant vessel defending itself against the
f a ship of war: the pinnace was interposed to break the shock of
ny's prow; and the dolphin, a huge mass of lead, was raised to a
ight, at the end of the yard of the enormous lateen sail (still to be
some large old-fashioned craft in the Mediterranean). It was then
suddenly at the moment of contact, to sink the enemy's vessel by
a hole through it.

statesman of very low repute, who had come forward after the
f Pericles, but speedily sunk into discredit.

o eminent prostitutes.

It is natural therefore to conclude, that with respect to the two other illustrious, but less extraordinary characters, he must have felt still less scrupulous.

The phrase therefore stands as a contemptuous caricature of Cleon's arrogance. He had spoken of himself as the most meritorious public character:

μετα Περικλεα καὶ Κιμωνα καὶ Θεμιστοκλεα.

The taunting parody of the poet says:

μετα Λυσικλεα καὶ Κυνναν καὶ Σαλαβακχαν.

We see that the two first names have a similarity in sound to those for which they were substituted (Pericles, Lysicles—Cymon, Cynna). And we may be sure that an exact mimicry of Cleon's manner, and tone of voice, would not have been wanting to make the caricature as manifest as possible.

To those who have formed a just estimate of the merits of Aristophanes, this explanation of the passage will not appear unnecessary. It occurs in the most striking part of the play, at the very point to which the attention of the audience had been directed; but surely the most implicit admiration for everything ancient cannot prevent us from perceiving, that, unexplained as it has been hitherto, it appears vapid and senseless in the extreme. We might safely defy the dullest individual to make a poorer attempt at a joke in his own person.

If, on the contrary, we suppose the passage in question to have contained a verbal burlesque heightened by personal mimicry, the audience would hardly have felt a deficiency of amusement at this particular point of the representation.

CLEON. To Minerva the sovereign goddess I call,
Our guide and defender, the hope of us all;
With a prayer and a vow, that, even as now,
If I'm truly your friend, unto my life's end,
I may dine in the hall, doing nothing at all!
But, if I despise you, or ever advise you,
Against what is best, for your comfort and rest;
Or neglect to attend you, defend you, befriend you,
May I perish and pine; may this carcase of mine
Be withered and dried, and curried beside;
And straps for your harness cut out from the hide.

S. S. Then, Demus—if I, tell a word of a lie;
If any man more can dote or adore,
With so tender a care, I make it my prayer,
My prayer and my wish, to be stewed in a dish;
To be sliced and slashed, minced and hashed;
And the offal remains that are left by the cook,
Dragged out to the grave, with my own flesh-hook.

CLEON. O Demus! has any man shown such a zeal,
Such a passion as I for the general weal?
Racking and screwing offenders to ruin;
With torture and threats extorting your debts;
Exhausting all means for enhancing your fortune,
Terror and force and intreaties importune,
With a popular, pure, patriotical aim;
Unmoved by compassion, or friendship, or shame.

S. S. All this I can do; more handily too;
With ease and despatch; I can pilfer and snatch,
And supply ye with loaves from another man's batch.
But now, to detect his saucy neglect;
(In spite of the boast, of his loyalty due,
Is the boiled and the roast, to your table and you.)
You—that in combat at Marathon sped,
And hewed down your enemies hand over head,
The Mede and the Persian, achieving a treasure
Of infinite honour and profit and pleasure,
Rhetorical praises and tragical phrases;
Of rich panegyric a capital stock—
He leaves you to rest on a seat of the rock,
Naked and bare, without comfort or care.
Whilst I—look ye there!—have quilted and wadded,
And tufted and padded this cushion so neat
To serve for your seat! Rise now, let me slip
It there under your hip, that on board of the ship,
With the toil of the oar, was blistered and sore,

Enduring the burthen and heat of the day,
At the battle of Salamis working away.

DEM. Whence was it you came! Oh, tell me your name—
Your name and your birth; for your kindness and worth
Bespeak you indeed of a patriot breed;
Of the race of Harmodius* sure you must be,
So popular, gracious and friendly to me.

CLEON. Can he win you with ease, with such trifles as these?

S. S. With easier trifles you manage to please.

CLEON. I vow notwithstanding, that never a man
Has acted since first the republic began,
On a more patriotical popular plan:
And if any man else can as truly be said
The friend of the people, I'll forfeit my head;
I'll make it a wager, and stand to the pledge.

S. S. And what is the token you mean to allege
Of that friendship of yours, or the good it ensures?
Eight seasons are past that he shelters his head
In a barrack, an outhouse, a hovel, a shed,
In nests of the rock where the vultures are bred,
In tubs, and in huts and the towers of the wall:
His friend and protector, you witness it all!
But where is thy pity, thou friend of the city;
To smoke him alive, to plunder his hive?
And when Archeptolemus† came on a mission,
With peace in his hand, with a fair proposition:
So drive them before you with kicks on the rump,
Peace, treaties and embassies, all in a lump!

CLEON. I did wisely and well; for the prophecies tell,
That if he perseveres, for a period of years;

---

* The assassin of Hipparchus, canonized by the democratic fanaticism of the Athenians.

† After the surrender of the Spartans at Pylos.

He shall sit in Arcadia, judging away
In splendour and honour, at five-pence a day:
Meantime I can feed and provide for his need;
Maintaining him wholly, fairly and foully,
With jurymen's pay, three-pence a day.

S. S. No vision or fancy prophetic have you,
Nor dreams of Arcadian empire in view;
A safer concealment is all that you seek:
In the hubbub of war, in the darkness and reek,
To plunder at large; to keep him confined,
Passive, astounded, humbled, blind,
Pining in penury, looking to thee,
For his daily provision a juryman's fee.
But if he returns to his country concerns,
His grapes and his figs, and his furmity kettle,
You'll find him a man of a different mettle.
When he feels that your fees had debarred him from these;
He'll trudge up to town, looking eagerly down,
And pick a choice pebble, and keep it in view,
As a token of spite,* for a vote against you.
Peace sinks you for ever, you feel it and know,
As your shifts and your tricks and your prophecies show.

CLEON. 'Tis a scandal, a shame! to throw slander and blame
On the friend of the people! a patriot name,
A kinder protector, I venture to say,

---

* "As a token of spite:" that is, as a memorandum of anticipated vengeance. It is recorded of some old Frenchman, in the early times of the last century, that having suffered in his fortune by the depreciation of the coinage, he set apart a gold piece of the old stamp; and used to show it to his friends, saying "that he kept it for the hire of a balcony looking into the Place de Greve, against the time when the minister should be brought out there for execution." With a similar feeling the Athenian countryman is described as selecting his pebble for a future vindictive vote against Cleon.

Than ever Themistocles was in his day,
Better and kinder in every way.
S. S. Witness, ye deities! witness his blasphemies!
You to compare with Themistocles! you!
That found us exhausted, and filled us anew
With a bumper of opulence; carving and sharing
Rich slices of empire; and kindly preparing,
While his guests were at dinner, a capital supper,
With a dainty remove, both under and upper,
The fort and the harbour, and many a dish
Of colonies, islands, and such kind of fish.
But now we are stunted, our spirit is blunted,
With paltry defences, and walls of partition;
With silly pretences of poor superstition;
And yet you can dare, with him to compare!
But he lost the command, and was banished the land,
While you rule over all, and carouse in the hall!
CLEON. This is horrible quite, and his slanderous spite,
Has no motive in view but my friendship for you,
My zeal—
DEM. There have done with your slang and your stuff,
You've cheated and choused and cajoled me enough.
S. S. My dear little Demus! you'll find it is true.
He behaves like a wretch and a villain to you.
He haunts your garden and there he plies,
Cropping the sprouts of the young supplies,
Munching and scrunching enormous rations
Of public sales and confiscations.
CLEON. Don't exult before your time,
Before you've answered for your crime—
A notable theft that I mean to prove
Of a hundred talents and above.
S. S. Why do ye plounce and flounce in vain?
Splashing and dashing and splashing again,

Like a silly recruit, just clapped on board?
Your crimes and acts are on record:
The Mitylenian bribe alone
Was forty minæ proved and shown.

CHORUS.*

O thou, the saviour of the State, with joy and admiration!
We contemplate your happy fate and future exaltation,
Doomed with the trident in your hand to reign in power and glory,
In full career to domineer, to drive the world before ye;
To raise with ease and calm the seas, and also raise a fortune,
While distant tribes, with gifts and bribes, to thee will be resorting.
Keep your advantage, persevere, attack him, work him, bait him,
You'll over-bawl him, never fear, and out-vociferate him.

CLEON. You'll not advance; you've not a chance, good people, of prevailing;
Recorded facts, my warlike acts, will muzzle you from railing;
As long as there remains a shield, of all the trophy taken
At Pylos, I can keep the field, unterrified, unshaken.

S. S. Stop there a bit, don't triumph yet—those shields afford a handle
For shrewd surmise; and it implies a treasonable scandal;
That there they're placed, all strapped and braced, ready prepared for action;
A plot it is! a scheme of his! a project of the faction!
Dear Demus, he, most wickedly, with villanous advisement,

* The metre now passes from the anapæst to the tetrameter iambic. See p. 139, note.

Prepares a force, as his resource, against your just chastisement:
The curriers and the tanners all, with sundry crafts of leather,
Young lusty fellows stout and tall, you see them leagued together;
And there beside them, there abide cheesemongers bold and hearty,
Who with the grocers are allied, to join the tanner's party.
Then if you turn your oyster eye, with ostracizing look,
Those his allies, will from the pegs, those very shields unhook:
Rushing outright, at dark midnight, with insurrection sudden,
To seize perforce the public stores, with all your meal and pudden.

DEM. Well I declare! the straps are there! O what a deep, surprising,
Uncommon rascal! What a plot the wretch has been devising.

CLEON. Hear and attend, my worthy friend, and don't directly credit
A tale for truth, because forsooth—"The man that told me, said it."
You'll never see a friend like me, that well or ill rewarded,
Has uniformly done his best, to keep you safely guarded;
Watching and working night and day, with infinite detections
Of treasons and conspiracies, and plots in all directions.

S. S. Yes, that's your course, your sole resource, the same device for ever.
As country fellows fishing eels, that in the quiet river,
Or the clear lake, have failed to take, begin to poke and muddle,

And rouse and rout it all about and work it to a puddle
To catch their game—you do the same in the hubbub and confusion,
Which you create to blind the State, with unobserved collusion,
Grasping at ease your bribes and fees. But answer! Tell me whether
You, that pretend yourself his friend, with all your wealth in leather,
Ever supplied a single hide, to mend his reverend battered
Old buskins?

DEM. No, not he, by Jove! Look at them, burst and tattered!

S. S. That shows the man! now spick and span, behold, my noble largess!
A lovely pair, bought for your wear, at my own cost and charges.

DEM. I see your mind is well inclined, with views and temper suiting,
To place the state of things and toes, upon a proper footing.

CLEON. What an abuse! a pair of shoes to purchase your affection!
Whilst all my worth is blotted forth, raised from your recollection;
That was your guide, so proved and tried, that showed myself so zealous,
And so severe this very year, and of your honour jealous,
Noting betimes all filthy crimes, without respect or pity.

S. S. He that's inclined to filth, may find enough throughout the city:
A different view determined you; those infamous offenders
Seemed in your eyes, likely to rise, aspirants and pretenders;

In bold debate, and ready prate, undaunted rhetoricians;
In impudence and influence, your rival politicians.
But there now, see! this winter he might pass without his clothing;
The season's cold, he's chilly and old; but still you think of nothing!
Whilst I, to show my love, bestow this waistcoat, as a present
Comely and new, with sleeves thereto, of flannel warm and pleasant.

DEM. How strange it is! Themistocles was reckoned mighty clever!
With all his wit, he could not hit on such a project ever,
Such a device, so warm, so nice; in short, it equals fairly
His famous wall, the port and all, that he contrived so rarely.

CLEON. To what a pass you drive me, alas! to what a vulgar level!

S. S. 'Tis your own plan; 'twas you began. As topers at a revel,
Pressed on a sudden, rise at once, and seize without regarding,
Their neighbours' slippers for the nonce, to turn into the garden.
I stand, in short, upon your shoes—I copy your behaviour,
And take and use, for my own views, your flattery and palaver.

CLEON. I shall outvie your flatteries, I!—see here this costly favour!
This mantle! take it for my sake—

DEM. Faugh! what a filthy flavour!
Off with it quick! it makes me sick, it stinks of hides and leather.

S. S. 'Twas by design: if you'll combine and put the facts together,
Like his device of Silphium spice—pretending to bedizen
You with a dress! 'Twas nothing less, than an attempt to poison.
He sunk the price of that same spice, and with the same intention—
You recollect?

DEM. I recollect the circumstance you mention.

S. S. Then recollect the sad effect!—that instance of the jury
All flushed and hot, fixed to the spot, exploding in a fury.
To see them was a scene of woe, in that infectious smother,
Winking and blinking in a row, and poisoning one another.

CLEON. Varlet and knave! thou dirty slave! what trash* have you collected?

S. S. 'Tis your own cue—I copy you. So the Oracle directed.

CLEON. I'll match you still, for I can fill his pint-pot of appointment,
For holidays and working-days.†

S. S. But here's a box of ointment—
A salve prescribed for heels when kibed, given with my humble duty.

CLEON. I'll pick your white hairs out of sight, and make you quite a beauty.

S. S. But here's a prize, for your dear eyes!—a rabbit-scut! See there now!

---

* A reprimand which in this, and one or two other instances, the translator is tempted to transfer to himself!

† Donatives on festival days, when the courts were closed and the jurymen's pay suspended.

CLEON. Wipe 'em, and then, wipe it again, dear Demus, on my hair now.

S. S. On mine, I say! On mine, do, pray!

[DEMUS *bestows, in a careless manner, his dirty preference upon the* S. S. *He pays no attention to the altercation which follows, but remains in the attitude of a solid old juryman, sitting upon a difficult cause concocting the decision which he at last pronounces.*]

CLEON. I shall fit you with a ship,
To provide for and equip,
One that has been long forgotten,
Leaky, worm-eaten, and rotten,
On it you shall waste and spend
Time and money without end.
Furthermore, if I prevail,
It shall have a rotten sail.

CHOR. There he's foaming, boiling over:
See the froth above the cover.
This combustion to allay,
We must take some sticks away.

CLEON. I shall bring you down to ruin,
With my summoning and suing
For arrear of taxes due,
And charges and assessments new,
In the census you shall pass
Rated in the richest class.

S. S. I reply with nothing worse
Than this just and righteous curse.
May you stand beside the stove,*
With the fishes that you love,
Fizzling in the tempting pan,
A distracted anxious man;

* It is to be presumed that Cleon is indulging himself in the Prytaneum.

The Milesian question * pending,
Which you then should be defending,
With a talent for your hire
If you gain what they desire.
Then their agent, in a sweat,
Comes to say the Assembly 's met;
All in haste you snatch and follow,
And in vain attempt to swallow;
Running with your gullet filled,
Till we see you choked and killed.

CHORUS. So be it, mighty Jove! so be it!
And holy Ceres, may I live to see it!

DEM. [*rousing himself gradually from his meditation*].
. . . In truth and he seems to me, by far the best—
The worthiest that has been long since—the kindest,
And best disposed, to the honest sober class
Of simple humble three-penny citizens.
You, Paphlagonian, on the contrary
Have offended and incensed me. Therefore now
Give back your seal of office! You must be
No more my steward!

CLEON. Take it! and withal
Bear this in mind! That he, my successor,
Whoever he may be, will prove a rascal
More artful and nefarious than myself—
A bigger rogue be sure, and baser far!

DEM. This seal is none of mine, or my eyes deceive me
The figure's not the same! I'm sure!

S. S. Let's see—
What was the proper emblem upon your seal?

DEM. A sirloin of roast beef—

S. S. It is not that

---

* The Scholiast affords us no light as to the allusion to the Milesian question.

DEM. Not the roast beef! What is it?

S. S. A cormorant
Haranguing open-mouthed upon a rock—*

DEM. Oh mercy!

S. S. What's the matter?

DEM. Away with it!
That was Cleonymus's seal, not mine—†
But here take this, act with it as my steward.

CLEON. Not yet, Sir! I beseech you. First permit me
To communicate some oracles I possess.

S. S. And me too, some of mine.

CLEON. Beware of them!
His oracles are most dangerous and infectious!
They strike ye with the leprosy and the jaundice.

S. S. And his will give you the itch, and a scald head;
And the glanders and mad-staggers! take my word for it!

CLEON. My oracles foretell, that you shall rule
Over all Greece, and wear a crown of roses.

S. S. And mine foretell, that you shall wear a robe
With golden spangles, and a crown of gold,
And ride in a golden chariot over Thrace;
In triumph with king Smicythes and his queen.

CLEON [*to the* S. S.].‡
Well, go for 'em! and bring 'em! and let him hear 'em!

S. S. Yes, sure—and you too—go fetch yours!

CLEON. Heigh-day!

S. S. Heigh-day! Why should not ye? What should hinder ye? [*Exeunt* CLEON *and* S. S.

The following Chorus has no merit whatever in the translation; and not much in the original. The first six lines are composed on the principle of contrast pointed out in p. 106.

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* The Pnyx, the place of assembly, was called the Rock.

† Cleonymus's emblem is a bird, to mark his cowardice. See "Acharnians," p. 18. The bird is also one of voracious habits.

‡ Cleon affects to give orders which the S. S. retorts.

CHORUS.

Joyful will it be and pleasant
To the future times and present,
The benignant happy day,
  Which will shine on us at last,
Announcing with his genial ray,
  That Cleon is condemned and cast!
Notwithstanding we have heard
  From the seniors of the city,*
Jurymen revered and feared,
  An opinion deep and pithy:
That the State for household use
  Wants a pestle and a mortar;
That Cleon serves to pound and bruise,
  Or else our income would run shorter.
But I was told, the boys at school
Observed it as a kind of rule,
  That he never could be made
    By any means to play the lyre,
  Till he was well and truly *paid*—
    I mean with lashes for his hire.
  At length his master all at once
  Expelled him as an utter dunce;
  As by nature ill inclined,
  And wanting *gifts* of every kind.

[*Re-enter* CLEON *and the* SAUSAGE-SELLER—CLEON *with a large packet and the* SAUSAGE-SELLER *staggering under a porter's load.*]

CLEON [*to* DEMUS].
Well, there's a bundle you see, I've brought of 'em;
But that's not all; there's more of them to come—

* There was a portion of the lower class of citizens who conceived that the State had an interest in supporting the tyrannical exactions of Cleon.

S. S. I grunt and sweat, you see, with the load of 'em ;
But that's not all ; there's more of 'em to come.

DEM. But what are these ?—all ?

CLEON. Oracles.

DEM. What, all ?

CLEON. Ah, you're surprised, it seems, at the quantity !
That's nothing ; I've a trunk full of 'em at home.

S. S. And I've a garret and out-house both brimful.

DEM. Let's give 'em a look. Whose oracles are these ?

CLEON. Bakis's mine are.

DEM. [*to the* S. S.]. Well, and whose are yours ?

S. S. Mine are from Glanis, Bakis's elder brother.

DEM. And what are they all about ?

CLEON. About the Athenians,
About the Island of Pylos,—about myself,—
About yourself,—about all kinds of things.

DEM. And what are yours about ?

S. S. About the Athenians,—
About pease-pudding and porridge,—about the Spartans,—
About the war,—about the pilchard fishery,—
About the state of things in general,—
About short weights and measures in the market,—
About all things and persons whatsoever,—
About yourself and me. Bid him go whistle.

DEM. Come, read them out then ! that one in particular,
My favourite one of all, about the eagle ;
About my being an eagle in the clouds.

CLEON. Listen then ! Give your attention to the Oracle !
"Son of Erechtheus, mark and ponder well,
This holy warning from Apollo's cell.
It bids thee cherish, him the sacred whelp ;
Who for thy sake doth bite and bark and yelp.
Guard and protect him from the chattering jay ;
So shall thy juries all be kept in pay."

DEM. That's quite above me ! Erechtheus and a whelp !

What should Erechtheus do with a whelp or a jay?
What does it mean?*

CLEON. The meaning of it is this:
I am presignified as a dog, who barks
And watches for you. Apollo therefore bids you
Cherish the sacred whelp—meaning myself.

S. S. I tell ye, the Oracle means no such thing:
This whelp has gnawed the corner off; but here,
I've a true perfect copy.

DEM. Read it out then!
Meanwhile I'll pick a stone up for the nonce,
For fear the dog in the Oracle should bite me.

S. S. "Son of Erechtheus, 'ware the gap-toothed dog,
The crafty mongrel that purloins thy prog;
Fawning at meals, and filching scraps away,
The whilst you gape and stare another way;
He prowls by night, and pilfers many a prize,
Amidst the sculleries and the colonies."

DEM. Well, Glanis has the best of it, I declare.

CLEON. First listen, my good friend, and then decide:
"In sacred Athens shall a woman dwell,
Who shall bring forth a lion fierce and fell;
This lion shall defeat the gnats and flies,
Which are that noble nation's enemies.
Him you must guard and keep for public good,
With iron bulwarks and a wall of wood."

DEM. [*to the* S. S.]
D'ye understand it?

S. S. No, not I, by Jove!

CLEON. Apollo admonishes you, to guard and keep me;
I am the lion here alluded to.

---

* Discussions on the genuine and corrupt copies of oracles were not unfrequent; we find an instance in Thucydides.—See also the scene of the Soothsayer in "The Birds."

DEM. A lion! Why just now you were a dog!

S. S. Aye, but he stifles the true sense of it,
Designedly—that "wooden and iron wall,"
In which Apollo tells ye he should be kept.

DEM. What did the deity mean by it? What d'ye think?

S. S. To have him kept in the pillory and the stocks.

DEM. That prophecy seems likely to be verified.

CLEON. "Heed not their strain; for crows and daws abound,
But love your faithful hawk, victorious found,
Who brought the Spartan magpies tied and bound."

S. S. "The Paphlagonian, impudent and rash,
Risked that adventure in a drunken dash.
O simple son of Cecrops, ill advised!
I see desert in arms unfairly prized:
Men only can secure and kill the game;
A woman's deed it is to cook the same."

CLEON. Do listen at least to the Oracle about Pylos:
"Pylos there is behind, and eke before,*
The bloody Pylos."

DEM. Let me hear no more!
Those Pylos's are my torment evermore.

S. S. But here's an Oracle which you must attend to;
About the navy—a very particular one.

DEM. Yes, I'll attend—I wish it would tell me how
To pay my seamen their arrears of wages.

S. S. "O son of Egeus, ponder and beware
Of the dog-fox, so crafty, lean, and spare,
Subtle and swift." Do ye understand it?

DEM. Yes!
Of course the dog-fox † means Philostratus.

---

* There were three places of this name, not very distant from each other.

† The dog was (in a bad sense) the type of impudence—the fox of cunning; Philostratus, the compound of the two, gained his subsistence by a very infamous trade.

S. S. That's not the meaning—but the Paphlagonian
Is always urging you to send out ships;
Cruizing about exacting contributions;
A thing that Apollo positively forbids.

DEM. But why are the ships here called dog-foxes?

S. S. Why?
Because the ships are swift, and dogs are swift.

DEM. But what has a fox to do with it? Why dog-foxes?

S. S. The fox is a type of the ship's crew; marauding
And eating up the vineyards.

DEM. Well, so be it!
But how are my foxes to get paid their wages?

S. S. I'll settle it all, and make provision for them,
Three days' provision, presently. Only now,
This instant, let me remind you of an Oracle:
"Beware Cullene."

DEM. What's the meaning of it?

S. S. Cullene, in the sense I understand,
Implies a kind of a *culling*, asking hand—
The *coiled* hand of an informing bully,
Culling a bribe from his affrighted *cully*,†
A hand like his.

CLEON. No, no! you're quite mistaken,
It alludes to Diopithes's lame hand.†
"But here's a glorious prophecy which sings,
How you shall rule on earth, and rank with kings,
And soar aloft in air on eagle's wings."

S. S. "And some of mine foretell that you shall be,
Sovereign of all the world and the Red Sea;

---

* The Scholiast tells us that the common informer at Athens, when accosting and threatening persons for the purpose of extortion, had an established token (the hand hollowed and slipped out beneath the cloak), indicating that they were willing to desist for a piece of money.

† As a soothsayer he ought to have been free from any bodily defect.

And sit on juries in Ecbatana,
Munching sweet buns and biscuit all the day."

CLEON. "But me Minerva loves, and I can tell
Of a portentous vision that befell—
The goddess in my sleep appeared to me,
Holding a flagon, as it seemed to be,
From which she poured upon the old man's crown
Wealth, health, and peace, like ointment running down."

S. S. "And I too dreamt a dream, and it was this:
Minerva came from the Acropolis,
There came likewise, her serpent and her owl;
And in her hand she held a certain bowl;
And poured ambrosia on the old man's head,
And salt-fish pickle upon yours instead."

DEM. Well, Glanis is the cleverest after all.
And therefore I'm resolved, from this time forth,
To put myself into your charge and keeping;
To be tended in my old age and taken care of.

CLEON. No, do pray wait a little; and see how regularly
I'll furnish you with a daily dole of barley.

DEM. Don't tell me of barley! I can't bear to hear of it!
I've been cajoled and choused more than enough,
By Thouphanes* and yourself this long time past.

CLEON. Then I'll provide you delicate wheaten flour.

S. S. And I'll provide you manchets, and roast meat,
And messes piping hot that cry "Come eat me."

DEM. Make haste then, both of ye. Whatever you do—
And whichever of the two befriends me most,
I'll give him up the management of the State.

CLEON. Well, I'll be first then.

S. S. No, you sha'n't, 'tis I.

[*Both run off; but the* SAUSAGE-SELLER *contrives to get the start.*]

---

* An adherent of Cleon.

CHORUS.

Worthy Demus! your estate
  Is a glorious thing we own—
The haughtiest of the proud and great
  Watch and tremble at your frown;
Like a sovereign or a chief,
  But so easy of belief.
Every fawning rogue and thief
Finds you ready to his hand,
Flatterers you cannot withstand.
To them your confidence is lent,
With opinions always bent
To what your last advisers say,
Your noble mind is gone astray.

DEMUS.

Those brains of yours are weak and green;
  My wits are sound whate'er ye say:
'Tis nothing but my froward spleen
  That affects this false decay:
  'Tis my fancy, 'tis my way,
  To drawl and drivel through the day.
  But though you see me dote and dream,
  Never think me what I seem!
  For my confidential slave
  I prefer a pilfering knave;
  And when he's pampered and full-blown;
  I snatch him up and—dash him down!

CHORUS.

We approve of your intent,
If you spoke it as you meant;
If you keep them like the beasts,
Fattened for your future feasts,

Pampered in the public stall,
Till the next occasion call;
Then a little easy vote
Knocks them down, and cuts their throat;
And you dish and serve them up,
As you want to dine or sup.

DEMUS.

Mark me!—When I seem to doze,
When my wearied eyelids close;
Then they think their tricks are hid:
But beneath the drooping lid,
Still I keep a corner left,
Tracing every secret theft.
I shall match them by-and-by!
All the rogues, you think so sly,
All the deep intriguing set,
Are but dancing in a net,*
Till I purge their stomachs clean
With the hemlock and the bean.

The SAUSAGE-SELLER *and* CLEON *re-enter separately.*

CLEON. Get out there!

S. S. You, get out yourself! you rascal!

CLEON. O Demus! here have I been waiting, ready
To attend upon ye and serve ye, a long, long time.

S. S. And I've been waiting a longer, longer time—
Ever so long—a great long while ago.

---

* Persons subject to an effectual restraint, of which they were themselves unaware, were said to be *dancing in a net.* The Royalists, in Cromwell's time, found themselves baffled in all their attempts, without at all suspecting the system of secret information by which they were circumvented and restrained. When this came to be known afterwards, it was said that Cromwell had kept them *dancing in a net*—*i.e.*, joyous and alert, conspiring and corresponding in imaginary security, wholly unconscious of the restraint in which they had been held.

DEM. And I've been waiting here cursing ye both,
A thousand times, a long, long time ago.

S. S. You know what you're to do?

DEM. Yes, yes, I know;
But you may tell me, however, notwithstanding.

S. S. Make it a race, and let us start to serve you,
And win your favour without loss of time.

DEM. So be it. Start now—one! two! three!

CLEON. Heigh-day!

DEM. Why don't you start?

CLEON. He's cheated and got before me.
[*Exit.*

DEM. Well truly indeed I shall be feasted rarely;
My courtiers and admirers will quite spoil me.

CLEON. There, I'm the first you see to bring ye a chair.

S. S. But a table. Here I've brought it, first and foremost.

CLEON. See here this little half-meal cake from Pylos,
Made from the flour of victory and success.

S. S. But here's a cake! see here! which the heavenly goddess
Patted and flatted herself, with her ivory hand,
For your own eating.

DEM. Wonderful, mighty goddess!
What an awfully large hand she must have had!

CLEON. See this pease-pudding, which the warlike virgin
Achieved at Pylos, and bestows upon you.

S. S. The goddess upholds your whole establishment,
And holds this mess of porridge over your head.

DEM. I say the establishment could not subsist
For a single hour, unless the goddess upheld
The porridge of our affairs, most manifestly.*

* This refers to a notion very prevalent among the Athenians, and which is alluded to elsewhere:—

CLEON. She, the dread virgin who delights in battle,
And storm and battery, sends this batter-pudding.

S. S. This savoury stew, with comely sippets decked,
Is sent you by the Gorgon-bearing goddess,
Who bids you gorge and gormandize thereon.

CLEON. The daughter of Jove arrayed in panoply
Presents you a pancake to create a panic
Amongst your enemies.

S. S. And by me she sends
For your behoof this dainty dish of fritters,
Well fried, to strike your foemen with affright;
And here's a cup of wine—taste it and try.

DEM. It's capital, faith!

S. S. And it ought to be; for Pallas
Mixed it herself expressly for your palate.

CLEON. This slice of rich sweet-cake, take it from me.

S. S. This whole great rich sweet-cake, take it from me.

CLEON [*to the* S. S.] Ah, but hare-pie—where will you get hare-pie?

S. S. [*aside*]. Hare-pie! What shall I do!—Come, now's the time,
Now for a nimble, knowing, dashing trick.

CLEON. [*to the* S. S., *showing the dish which he is going to present*].
Look there, you poor rapscallion.

S. S. Pshaw! no matter.

"Rash and ever in the wrong, a providence protects us ever,
Guiding all your empty plans, assisting every wild endeavour."
"Clouds," v. 586.

[2] It was founded on an anecdote, dating as far back as the time of the contest between Neptune and Minerva. Neptune, is his chagrin, imprecated upon the territory of which he was dispossessed, the curse of being always governed by "bad councils." This Minerva could not cancel; but she subjoined that these bad councils, bad as they might be, should be successful.

I've people of my own there in attendance.
They're coming here—I see them.

CLEON. Who? What are they?

S. S. Envoys with bags of money.

[CLEON *sets down his hare-pie, and runs off the stage to intercept the supposed envoys.*]

CLEON. Where? Where are they?
Where? Where?

S. S. What's that to you? Can't ye be civil?
Why don't you let the foreigners alone?
There's a hare-pie, my dear own little Demus,
A nice hare-pie, I've brought ye! See, look there!

CLEON [*returning*]. By Jove, he's stolen it, and served it up.

S. S. Just as you did the prisoners at Pylos.

DEMUS. Where did ye get it? How did ye steal it? Tell me.

S. S. The scheme and the suggestion were divine,
The theft and the execution simply mine.

CLEON. I took the trouble.

S. S. But I served it up.

DEMUS. Well, he that brings the thing must get the thanks.

CLEON [*aside*]. Alas, I'm circumvented and undone
Out-faced and over-impudentified.

S. S. Come, Demus, had not you best decide at once,
Which is your truest friend, and best disposed
To the interest of the State, to your belly and you.

DEMUS. But how can I decide it cleverly?
Which would the audience think is the cleverest way?

S. S. I'll tell ye; take my chest and search it fairly,
Then search the Paphlagonian's and determine.

DEMUS. Let's look; what's here?

S. S. It's empty, don't you see?
My dear old man, I've given you everything.

DEMUS. Well, here's a chest indeed, in strict accordance
With the *judgment* of the public; perfectly *empty!*

S. S. Come now, let's rummage out the Paphlagonian's.
See there!

DEMUS. Oh bless me, what a hoard of dainties!
And what a lump of cake the fellow has kept,
Compared with the little tiny slice he gave me.

S. S. That was his common practice; to pretend
To make you presents, giving up a trifle,
To keep the biggest portion for himself.

DEMUS. O villain, how you've wronged and cheated me;
Me that have honoured ye, and have made ye presents.

CLEON. I stole on principle for the public service.

DEMUS. Pull off your garland—give it back to me,
For him to wear!

S. S. Come, sirrah, give it back!

CLEON. Not so. There still remains an Oracle,
Which marks the fatal sole antagonist,
Predestined for my final overthrow.

S. S. Yes! And it points to me, my name and person!

CLEON. Yet would I fain inquire and question you;
How far the signs and tokens of the prophecy
Combine in your behalf. Answer me truly!
What was your early school? Where did you learn
The rudiments of letters and of music?

S. S. Where hogs are singed and scalded in the shambles,
There was I pummelled to a proper tune.

CLEON. Ha, sayst thou so? this prophecy begins
To bite me to the soul with deep forebodings.
Yet tell me again—What was your course of practice
In feats of strength and skill at the Palæstra?

S. S. Stealing and staring, perjuring and swearing.

CLEON. O mighty Apollo, your decree condemns me!
Say, what was your employment afterwards?

S. S. I practised as a Sausage-seller chiefly,
Occasionally as pimp and errand-boy.

CLEON. Oh misery! lost and gone! totally lost!
[*after a pause*]
One single hope remains, a feeble thread,
I grasp it to the last. Yet answer me:
What was your place of sale for sausages?
Was it the market or the city gate?

S. S. The city gate! Where salted fish are sold!

CLEON. Out! out alas! my destiny is fulfilled:
Hurry me hence within with quick conveyance,
The wreck and ruin of my former self.
Farewell my name and honours! Thou, my garland,
Farewell! my successor must wear you now,
To shine in new pre-eminence—a rogue,
Perhaps less perfect, but more prosperous!

S. S. O Jove! Patron of Greece! the praise be thine!

DEMOSTHENES.* I wish you joy most heartily; and I hope,
Now you're promoted, you'll remember me,
For helping you to advancement. All I ask
Is Phanus's place to be under-scrivener to you.

DEM. [*to the* S. S.] You tell me what's your name?

S. S. Agoracritus;
So called from the Agora where I got my living.

DEM. With you then, Agoracritus, in your hands
I place myself; and furthermore consign
This Paphlagonian here to your disposal.

S. S. Then you shall find me, a most affectionate
And faithful guardian; the best minister
That ever served the sovereign of the Cockneys.
[*Exeunt Omnes.*

* In a very civil, submissive tone.

The actors being withdrawn, the Chorus remain again in possession of the theatre. Their first song is a parody from Pindar, which is converted into a lampoon upon Lysistratus, who having reduced himself to poverty had procured (by the assistance of his friends) a lucrative appointment at Delphi. He is mentioned in "The Acharnians," see the song, p. 60.

To record to future years
The lordly wealthy charioteers,
Steeds, and cars, and crowns victorious,
These are worthy themes and glorious.
  Let the Muse refrain from malice,
Nor molest with idle sallies
Him the poor Lysistratus;
Taunted for his empty purse,
Every penny gone and spent,
Lately with Thaumantis sent
On a Delphic embassy,
With a tear in either eye,
Clinging to the deity
To bemoan his misery.

EPIRREMA.

An attempt is here made to express what the Scholiast points out; namely, that the contrast between the two brothers is a piece of dry irony. In other respects the original is hardly capable of translation.

To revile the vile, has ever been accounted just and right,
The business of the comic bard, his proper office, his delight.
On the villanous and base, the lashes of invective fall;
While the virtuous and the good are never touched or harmed at all.
Thus, without offence, to mark a profligate and wicked brother,
For the sake of explanation, I proceed to name another:

One is wicked and obscure, the brother unimpeached and glorious,
Eminent for taste and art, a person famous and notorious.
Arignotus—when I name him, you discern at once, with ease,
The viler and obscurer name, the person meant—Ariphrades,
If he were a rascal only we should let the wretch alone,
He's a rascal, and he knows it, and desires it to be known.
Still we should not have consented to lampoon him into vogue,
As an ordinary rascal, or a villain, or a rogue;
But the wretch is grown inventive, eager to descend and try
Undiscovered, unattempted depths of filth and infamy;
With his nastiness and lewdness, going on from bad to worse,
With his verses and his music, and his friend Oionychus.
Jolly friends and mates of mine, when with me you quench your thirst,
Spit before you taste the wine—spit upon the fellow first.

Meditating on my bed,
Strange perplexities are bred
In my weary, restless head.
I contemplate and discuss
The nature of Cleonymus,
All the modes of his existence,
His provision and subsistence,
His necessities and wants,
And the houses that he haunts,
Till the master of the table,
Accosts him like the gods in fable,
Manifested and adored
At Baucis' and Philemon's board—

"Mighty sovereign! Mighty lord!
Leave us in mercy and grace. Forbear!
Our frugal insufficient fare,
Pardon it! and in mercy spare!

ANTEPIRREMA.

Our Triremes, I was told, held a conference of late,
One, a bulky dame and old, spoke the first in the debate:
"Ladies, have you heard the news? In the town it passed for truth,
That a certain low bred upstart, one Hyperbolus forsooth,
Asks a hundred of our number, with a further proposition,
That we should sail with him to Carthage* on a secret expedition."
They all were scandalized and shocked to hear so wild a project planned,
A virgin vessel newly docked, but which never had been manned,
Answered instantly with anger, "If the Fates will not afford me
Some more suitable proposal, than that wretch to come aboard me,
I would rather rot and perish, and remain from year to year,
Till the worms have eat my bottom, lingering in the harbour here.
No, thank heaven, for such a master Nauson's daughter is too good;
And if my name were not Nauphantis, I am made of nails and wood.
I propose then to retire in sanctuary to remain
Near the temple of the Furies, or to Theseus and his fane.

---

* Carthage, in this instance, may admit of a doubt. See note to p. 97; but it was by no means beyond the speculations of Athenian ambition at that time.

Still the project may proceed; Hyperbolus can never fail.
He may launch the trays of wood, in which his lamps were
set to *sale*."

AGORACRITUS (*the* SAUSAGE-SELLER).

Peace be amongst you! Silence! Peace!
Close the courts; let pleadings cease!
All your customary joys,
Juries, accusers, strife and noise!
Be merry, I say! Let the theatre ring
With a shout of applause for the news that I bring.

CHOR. O thou the protector and hope of the State,
Of the isles and allies of the city, relate
What happy event, do you call us to greet,
With bonfire and sacrifice filling the street.

AG. Old Demus within has moulted his skin;
I've cooked him, and stewed him, to render him stronger,
Many years younger, and shabby no longer.

CHOR. Oh, what a change! How sudden and strange!
But where is he now?

AG. On the citadel's brow,
In the lofty old town of immortal renown,
With the noble Ionian violet crown.

CHOR. What was his vesture, his figure and gesture?
How did you leave him, and how does he look?

AG. Joyous and bold, as when feasting of old,
When his battles were ended, triumphant and splendid,
With Miltiades sitting carousing at rest,
Or good Aristides his favourite guest.
You shall see him here strait; for the citadel gate
Is unbarred; and the hinges—you hear how they grate!

[*The Scene changes to a view of the Propylæum.*]

Give a shout for the sight of the rocky old height!
And the worthy old wight, that inhabits within!

CHOR. Thou glorious hill! pre-eminent still
For splendour of empire and honour and worth!
Exhibit him here, for the Greeks to revere;
Their patron and master the monarch of earth!
AG. There, see him, behold! with the jewels of gold
Entwined in his hair, in the fashion of old;
Not dreaming of verdicts or dirty decrees;
But lordly, majestic, attired at his ease,
Perfuming all Greece with an odour of peace.
CHOR. We salute you, and greet you, and bid you rejoice;
With unanimous heart, with unanimous voice,
Our sovereign lord, in glory restored,
Returning amongst us in royal array,
Worthy the trophies of Marathon's day!

[DEMUS *comes forward in his splendid old-fashioned attire: the features of his mask are changed to those of youth, and his carriage throughout this scene is marked with the characteristics of youth, warmth, eagerness, and occasional bashfulness and embarrassment.*]

DEM. My dearest Agoracritus, come here—
I'm so obliged to you for your cookery!
I feel an altered man, you've quite transformed me.
AG. What! I? That's nothing; if you did but know
The state you were in before, you'd worship me.
DEM. What was I doing? How did I behave?
Do tell me—inform against me—let me know.
AG. Why first, then: if an orator in the Assembly
Began with saying, Demus, I'm your friend,
Your faithful zealous friend, your only friend,
You used to chuckle, and smirk, and hold your head up.
DEM. No sure!
AG. So he gained his end, and bilked and choused you.

DEM. But did not I perceive it? Was not I told?

AG. By Jove, and you wore those ears of yours continually
Wide open or close shut, like an umbrella.

DEM. Is it possible? Was I indeed so mere a driveller
In my old age, so superannuated?

AG. Moreover, if a couple of orators
Were pleading in your presence; one proposing
To equip a fleet, his rival arguing
To get the same supplies distributed
To the jurymen, the patron of the juries
Carried the day. But why do you hang your head so?
What makes you shuffle about? Can't ye stand still?

DEM. I feel ashamed of myself and all my follies.

AG.* 'Twas not your fault—don't think of it. Your advisers
Were most to blame. But for the future—tell me,
If any rascally villanous orator
Should address a jury with such words as these:
"Remember, if you acquit the prisoner
Your daily food and maintenance are at stake,"
How would you treat such a pleader? Answer me.

DEM. I should toss him headlong into the public pit,
With a halter round his gullet, and Hyperbolus
Tied fast to the end of it.

AG. That's a noble answer!
Wise and judicious, just and glorious!
Now tell me, in other respects, how do you mean
To manage your affairs?

DEM. Why first of all
I'll have the arrears of seamen's wages paid
To a penny, the instant they return to port.

---

* The tone of the S. S. is that of a considerate, indulgent preceptor to a young man who has been misbehaving.

AG. There's many a worn-out rump will bless ye and thank ye.

DEM. Moreover, no man that has been enrolled
Upon the list for military service,
Shall have his name erased for fear or favour.

AG. That gives a bang to Cleonymus's buckler.

DEM. I'll not permit those fellows without beards
To harangue in our Assembly; boys or men.

AG. Then what's to become of Cleisthenes and Strato? *
Where must they speak?

DEM. I mean those kind of youths,
The little puny would-be politicians,
Sitting conversing in perfumers' shops,
Lisping and prating in this kind of way:
"Phæax is sharp—he made a good come-off,
And saved his life in a famous knowing style.
I reckon him a first-rate; quite capital
For energy and compression; so collected,
And such a choice of language! Then to see him
Battling against a mob—it's quite delightful!
He's never cowed! He bothers 'em completely!"

AG. It's your own fault, in part you've helped to spoil 'em;
But what do you mean to do with 'em for the future?

DEM. I shall send them into the country, all the pack of 'em,
To learn to hunt, and leave off making laws.

AG. Then I present you here with a folding chair,
And a stout lad to carry it after you.

DEM. Ah, that reminds one of the good old times.

AG. But what will you say, if I give you a glorious peace,
A lusty strapping truce of thirty years?
Come forward here, my lass, and show yourself.

---

* See "Acharnians," p. 19, where both are mentioned.

DEM. By Jove, what a face and figure! I should like
To ratify and conclude incontinently.
Where did you find her?

AG. Oh, the Paphlagonian,
Of course, had huddled her out of sight, within there.
But now you've got her, take her back with you
Into the country.

DEM. But the Paphlagonian,
What shall we do to punish him? What d'ye think?

AG. Oh, no great matter. He shall have my trade;
With an exclusive sausage-selling patent,
To traffic openly at the city gates,
And garble his wares with dogs' and asses' flesh;
With a privilege, moreover, to get drunk,
And bully among the strumpets of the suburbs,
And the ragamuffin waiters at the baths.

DEM. That's well imagined, it precisely suits him;
His natural bent, it seems, his proper element
To squabble with poor trulls and low rapscallions.
As for yourself, I give you an invitation
To dine with me in the hall. You'll fill the seat
Which that unhappy villain held before.
Take this new robe! Wear it and follow me!
And you, the rest of you, conduct that fellow
To his future home and place of occupation,
The gate of the city; where the allies and foreigners,
That he maltreated, may be sure to find him.

[*Exeunt.*

THE BIRDS.

Intended to convey some notion of its effect as an acted play, and to illustrate certain points of dramatic humour and character discoverable in the original.

"Terentius Menandrum, Plautus et Cæcilius veteres Comicos interpretati sunt, numquid hærent in verbis, ac non decorem potius et elegantiam in translatione conservant?"—HIERON., Epis. de optimo genere interpretandi.

"Si Graios patrio carmine adire sales
Possumus, optatis plus jam processimus ipsis.
Hoc satis est."—VIRGIL.

The Birds.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PEISTHETAIRUS.—An Athenian citizen, but disgusted with his own country, starts on his travels proposing to seek his fortune in the kingdom of the Birds. He is represented as the essential man of business and ability, the true political adventurer, the man who directs everything and everybody, who is never in the wrong, never at a loss, never at rest, never satisfied with what has been done by others, uniformly successful in his operations. He maintains a constant ascendency, or if he loses it for a moment, recovers it immediately.

EUELPIDES.—A simple, easy-minded, droll companion, his natural follower and adherent, as the merry-andrew is of the mountebank. It will be seen that, like the merry-andrew, he interposes his buffoonish comments on the grand oration delivered by his master.

EPOPS.—King of the Birds, formerly Tereus king of Thrace, but long ago, according to the records of mythology, transformed into a *Hoopoe*. He appears as the courteous dignified sovereign of a primitive uncivilized race whom he is desirous to improve; he gives, a gracious reception to strangers arriving from a country more advanced in civilization, and adopts the projects of aggrandizement suggested to him by Peisthetairus.

THE CHORUS OF BIRDS, his subjects, retain, on the contrary, their hereditary hatred and suspicion of the human race; they are ready to break out into open mutiny against their king, and to massacre his foreign (human) advisers upon the spot. It is with the greatest difficulty that they can be prevailed upon to hear reason, and attend to the luminous exposition of Peisthetairus. His harangue has the effect of conciliating and convincing them: his projects are adopted

without a dissentient voice. War is not immediately declared against the gods, but a sort of Mexican blockade is established by proclamation.

PROMETHEUS.—A malcontent deity, the ancient patron of the human race, still retaining a concealed attachment to the deposed dynasty of Saturn. He comes over secretly with intelligence which Peisthetairus avails himself of, and which proves ultimately decisive of the subjugation of the gods.

NEPTUNE, HERCULES, TRIBALLUS, or the TRIBALLIAN.—Joint ambassadors from the gods commissioned to treat with Peisthetairus. Neptune is represented as a formal dignified personage of the old school. Hercules as a passionate, wrong-headed, greedy blockhead; he is cajoled and gained over by Peisthetairus, and in his turn intimidates the Triballian, an ignorant barbarian deity who is hardly able to speak intelligibly. They join together, Neptune is out-voted, and Peisthetairus concludes a treaty by which his highest pretensions are realized.

The characters above mentioned are the only ones who contribute in any way to the progress of the drama; the remainder, a very amusing set of persons, are introduced in detached scenes, exemplifying the various interruptions and annoyances incident to the man of business, distracting his attention and embarrassing him in the exercise of his authoritative functions. There are, however, exceptions.

IRIS, who is brought in, having been captured and detained for an infringement of the blockade.

A PRIEST, who comes to sacrifice at the inauguration of the new city.

TWO MESSENGERS, arriving from different quarters with very interesting and satisfactory intelligence.

The rest are a mere series of intruders on the time and attention of the great man.

POET.—A ragged vagabond, who comes begging with an inaugural ode on the foundation of the new city.

A SOOTHSAYER, arriving with Oracles relative to the same important event, and a demand of perquisites due to himself by divine authority.

METON, the Astronomer, proposes to make a plan and survey of the new city.

A COMMISSIONER from Athens, a very authoritative personage.

A VENDOR of copies of decrees, he enters reading them aloud like a hawker to attract purchasers.

PARRICIDE.—A young man, who has beaten his father and proposes to strangle him, offers himself as a desirable acquisition to the new colony.

KINESIAS, the dithyrambic poet, applies for a pair of wings.

INFORMER.—A young man, whose hereditary trade is that of an informer, and whose practice extends to the islands, comes with the same application.

SCENE.

[*A wild desolate country with a bare open prospect on one side, and some upright rocks covered with shrubs and brushwood in the centre of the stage.* PEISTHETAIRUS *and* EUELPIDES *appear as a couple of worn-out pedestrian travellers, the one with a raven and the other with a jackdaw on his hand. They appear to be seeking for a direction from the motions and signals made to them by the Birds.*]

EU. [*speaking to his jackdaw*].
Right on, do ye say? to the tree there in the distance?
PEIS. [*speaking first to his raven, and then to his companion*].
Plague take ye! Why this creature calls us back!
EU. What use can it answer tramping up and down?
We're lost, I tell ye: our journey's come to nothing.
PEIS. To think of me travelling a thousand stadia
With a raven for my adviser!
EU. Think of me, too,
Going at the instigation of a jackdaw,
To wear my toes and my toe-nails to pieces!
PEIS. I don't know even the country where we've got to.
EU. And yet you expect to find a country here,
A country for yourself!
PEIS. Truly not I;
Not even Execestides * could do it,
That finds himself a native everywhere.

---

* He is attacked again in this play, as a foreign barbarian arrogating to himself the privileges of a true-born Athenian.

EU. Oh dear! We're come to ruin, utter ruin!
PEIS. Then go that way, can't ye: "the Road to Ruin!"
EU. He has brought us to a fine pass, that crazy fellow,
Philocrates the poulterer; he pretended
To enable us to find where Tereus lives;
The king that was, the Hoopoe that is now;
Persuading us to buy these creatures of him,
That raven there for threepence,—and this other,
This little Tharrelides * of a jackdaw,
He charged a penny for: but neither of 'em
Are fit for anything but to bite and scratch.
[*speaking to his jackdaw*]
Well, what are ye after now?—gaping and poking!
You've brought us straight to the rock. Where would you take us?
There's no road here!
PEIS. No, none, not even a path.
EU. Nor don't your raven tell us anything?
PEIS. She's altered somehow—she croaks differently.
EU. But which way does she point? What does she say?
PEIS. Say? Why, she says, she'll bite my fingers off.
EU. Well, truly it's hard upon us, hard indeed,
To go with our own carcases to the crows,
And not be able to find 'em after all.
[*turning to the audience*] †
For our design, most excellent spectators,

---

* Tharrelides was nicknamed Jackdaw, and Euelpides *in contempt of his jackdaw* calls it a Tharrelides! The raven and the jackdaw are characteristic. Peisthetairus is the bearer of the sagacious bird, his companion is equipped with a jackdaw.

† Peisthetairus, it will be seen, allows his companion to put himself forward, with the newly discovered natives; remaining himself in the back-ground as the person of authority, making use of the other as his harbinger; he allows him also to address the audience, not choosing to compromise himself by unnecessary communications.

The full and complete account of their motives and design is, moreover, much better suited to the careless gossiping character of Euelpides.

(Our passion, our disease, or what you will)
Is the reverse of that which Sacas* feels;
For he, though not a native, strives perforce
To make himself a citizen: whilst we,
Known and acknowledged as Athenians born,
(Not hustled off, nor otherwise compelled)
Have deemed it fitting to betake ourselves
To these our legs, and make our person scarce.
Not through disgust or hatred or disdain
Of our illustrious birthplace, which we deem
Glorious and free; with equal laws ordained
For fine and forfeiture and confiscation,
With taxes universally diffused;
And suits and pleas abounding in the Courts.
For grasshoppers sit only for a month
Chirping upon the twigs; but our Athenians
Sit chirping and discussing all the year,
Perched upon points of evidence and law.
Therefore we trudge upon our present travels,
With these our sacrificial implements,
To seek some easier unlitigious place;
Meaning to settle there and colonize.
Our present errand is in search of Tereus,
(The Hoopoe that is now) to learn from him
If in his expeditions, flights, and journeys,
He ever chanced to light on such a spot.

PEIS. Holloh!

EU. What's that?

PEIS. My raven here points upwards.
Decidedly!

---

* Acestor, a tragical poet, not being a genuine Athenian was called Sakas, from the name of a Thracian tribe.

We may suppose that Peisthetairus must have accompanied this speech with a grave authoritative gesture indicative of assent and approbation.

EU. Ay, and here's my jackdaw too,
Gaping as if she saw something above.
Yes,—I'll be bound for it; this must be the place:
We'll make a noise, and know the truth of it.

PEIS. Then "kick against the rock." *

EU. Knock you your head
Against the rock!—and make it a double knock!

PEIS. Then fling a stone at it!

EU. With all my heart,
Holloh there!

PEIS. What do you mean with your Holloh?
You should cry Hoop for a Hoopoe.

EU. Well then, Hoop!
Hoop and holloh, there!—Hoopoe, Hoopoe, I say!

TR. What's here? Who's bawling there? Who wants my master?

[*The door is opened, and both parties start at seeing each other.*]

EU. Oh mercy, mighty Apollo! what a beak!

TR. Out! out upon it! a brace of bird-catchers!

EU. No, no; don't be disturbed; think better of us.

TR. You'll both be put to death.

EU. But we're not men.

TR. Not men! what are ye? what do ye call yourselves?

EU. The fright has turned me into a yellow-hammer.

TR. Poh! Stuff and nonsense!

EU. I can prove it to ye.
Search!

TR. But your comrade here; what bird is he?

PEIS. I'm changed to a golden pheasant just at present.

---

* "To kick against the rock" was proverbial.

EU. Now tell me, in heaven's name, what creature are ye?

TR. I'm a slave bird.

EU. A slave? how did it happen?
Were you made prisoner by a fighting cock?

TR. No. When my master made himself a Hoopoe,
He begged me to turn bird to attend upon him.

EU. Do birds then want attendance?

TR. Yes, of course,
In his case, having been a man before,
He longs occasionally for human diet,
His old Athenian fare: pilchards, for instance.
Then I must fetch the pilchards; sometimes porridge;
He calls for porridge, and I mix it for him.

EU.* Well, you're a dapper waiter, a didapper;
But didapper, I say, do step within there,
And call your master out.

TR. But just at present
He's taking a little rest after his luncheon,
Some myrtle berries and a dish of worms.

EU. No matter, call him here. We wish to speak to him.

TR. He'll not be pleased, I'm sure; but notwithstanding,†
Since you desire it, I'll make bold to call him.

[*Exit.*

PEIS. [*looking after him*].
Confound ye, I say, you've frightened me to death.

EU. He has scared away my jackdaw; it's flown away.

PEIS. You let it go yourself, you coward.

---

* The Trochilus has been unnecessarily communicative, and shown himself a very simple sort of a sewing-man; Eu. has tact enough to discover this, and assumes the ascendency accordingly.

† In the tone of Simple, Master Slender's serving man.

EU. Tell me,
Have not you let your raven go?

PEIS. Not I.

EU. Where is it then?

PEIS. Flown off of its own accord.

EU. You did not let it go! you're a brave fellow!

[*The* HOOPOE *from within.*]

HOO. Open the door, I say; let me go forth.

[*The royal* HOOPOE *appears with a tremendous beak and crest.*]

EU. O Hercules, what a creature! What a plumage!
And a triple tier of crests; what can it be!

HOO. Who called? who wanted me?

EU. May the heavenly powers . . . .
. . . . Confound ye, I say [*aside*].

HOO. You mock at me perhaps,
Seeing these plumes. But, stranger, you must know—
That once I was a man.

EU. We did not laugh
At you, Sir.

HOO. What, then, were you laughing at?

EU. Only that beak of yours seemed rather odd.

HOO. It was your poet Sophocles * that reduced me
To this condition with his tragedies.

EU. What are you, Tereus? Are you a bird, or what?

HOO. A bird.

EU. Then where are all your feathers?

HOO. Gone.

EU. In consequence of an illness?

HOO. No, the birds
At this time of the year leave off their feathers,
But you! What are ye? Tell me.

---

* In his tragedy of "Tereus," Sophocles had represented him as transformed (probably only in the last scenes) with the head and beak of a bird.

Eu. Mortal men.

Hoo. What countrymen?

Eu. Of the country of the Triremes.*

Hoo. Jurymen, I suppose?

Eu. Quite the reverse,
We're anti-jurymen.

Hoo. Does that breed still
Continue amongst you?

Eu. Some few specimens †
You'll meet with, here and there, in country places.

Hoo. And what has brought you here? What was your object?

Eu. We wished to advise with you.

Hoo. With me! For what?

Eu. Because you were a man: the same as us;
And found yourself in debt: the same as us;
And did not like to pay: the same as us;
And after that, you changed into a bird;
And ever since have flown and wandered far
Over the lands and seas, and have acquired
All knowledge that a bird or man can learn.
Therefore we come as suppliants, to beseech
Your favour and advice to point us out
Some comfortable country, close and snug,
A country like a blanket or a rug,
Where we might fairly fold ourselves to rest.

Hoo. Do you wish then for a greater State than Athens?

Eu. Not greater; but more suitable for us.

Hoo. It's clear you're fond of aristocracy.

---

* Galleys with three banks of oars. The Athenians were at that time undisputed masters of the sea.

† The love of litigation and the passion for sitting on juries, with the exception of a few who retained their old agricultural habits, had infected the whole Athenian community.

EU. What him, the son of Scellias! Aristocrates? *
I abhor him.
HOO. Well, what kind of a town would suit ye?
EU. Why, such a kind of town as this, for instance,
A town where the importunities and troubles
Are of this sort. Suppose a neighbour calls
Betimes in the morning with a sudden summons:
"Now, don't forget," says he, "for heaven's sake,
To come to me to-morrow, bring your friends,
Children and all, we've wedding cheer at home.
Come early, mind ye, and if you fail me now,
Don't let me see your face, when I'm in trouble."
HOO. So, you're resolved to encounter all these hardships!
[*to* PEISTHETAIRUS]
And what say you?
PEIS. My fancy's much the same.
HOO. How so?
PEIS. To find a place of the same sort·
A kind of place, where a good jolly father
Meets and attacks me thus—"What's come to ye
With my young people? You don't take to 'em.
What! they're not reckoned ugly! You might treat 'em,
As an old friend, with a little attention surely,
And take a trifling civil freedom with 'em."
HOO. Ay! You're in love I see with difficulties
And miseries. Well, there's a city in fact
Much of this sort; one that I think might suit ye,
Near the Red Sea.
EU. No, no! not near the sea! †

* Little or nothing is known of Aristocrates. He lived to the end of the war, and acted in concert with Thrasybulus against Critias. "Dem. in Timoc."

† A humorous blunder. The Red Sea was in fact as inaccessible to ancient European navigation as the Caspian.

Lest I should have the Salaminian galley *
Arriving some fine morning, with a summons
Sent after me, and a pursuivant to arrest me.
But could not you tell us of some Grecian city?

HOO. Why there's in Elis there, the town of Lepreum.

EU. No, no! No Lepreums: nor no lepers neither.
No leprosies for me. Melanthius †
Has given me a disgust for leprosies.

HOO. Then there's Opuntius in the land of Locris.

EU. Opuntius? Me to be like Opuntius! ‡
With his one eye! Not for a thousand drachmas.
But tell me among the birds here, how do ye find it?
What kind of an existence?

HOO. Pretty fair;
Not much amiss. Time passes smoothly enough;
And money is out of the question. We don't use it.

EU. You've freed yourselves from a great load of dross.

HOO. We've our field sports. We spend our idle mornings
With banqueting and collations in the gardens,
With poppy-seeds and myrtle.

EU. So your time
Is passed like a perpetual wedding-day.

[PEISTHETAIRUS, *who has hitherto felt his way by putting* EUELPIDES *forward, and allowing him to take the lead, and who has paid no attention to this trifling inconclusive conversation, breaks out as from a profound reflective reverie.*]

* The Salaminian galley had been sent to arrest Alcibiades, then one of the joint commanders in Sicily. This was one of the most fatal acts of that popular insanity which it was the poet's object to mitigate and counteract.

† A tragic poet, said to have been leprous, ridiculed elsewhere by the author, and by other comic poets, as Plato and Callias.

‡ Nothing is recorded of Opuntius, except that he was reckoned a poltroon, and was blind of one eye.

PEIS. Ha! What a power is here! What opportunities!
If I could only advise you. I see it all!
The means for an infinite empire and command!

HOO. And what would you have us do? What's your advice?

PEIS. Do? What would I have ye do? Why first of all
Don't flutter and hurry about all open-mouthed,
In that undignified way. With us, for instance,
At home, we should cry out "What creature's that?"
And Teleas would be the first to answer,
"A mere poor creature, a weak restless animal,
A silly bird, that's neither here nor there." *

HOO. Yes, Teleas might say so. *It would be like him.*
But tell me, what would you have us do?

PEIS. [*emphatically*]. Concentrate!
Bring all your birds together. Build a city.

HOO. The birds! How could we build a city? Where?

PEIS. Nonsense. You can't be serious. What a question!
Look down.

HOO. I do.

PEIS. Look up now.

HOO. So I do.

PEIS. Now turn your neck round.†

HOO. I should sprain it though.

PEIS. Come, what d'ye see?

HOO. The clouds and sky; that's all.

PEIS. Well, that we call the pole and the atmosphere;
And would it not serve you birds for a metropole?

---

* The lines between inverted commas may be understood either as the words of Teleas or as a description of him; the ambiguity exists in the original and is evidently intentional. It is continued in the next line of the Hoopoe's answer.

† See in "The Knights" a similar instance of ridiculous stage effect, where the Sausage-seller is mounted on his stool to survey the Athenian Empire.

HOO. Pole? Is it called a pole?
PEIS. Yes, that's the name.
Philosophers of late call it the pole;
Because it wheels and rolls itself about,
As it were, in a kind of a roly-poly way.*
Well, there then, you may build and fortify,
And call it your Metropolis—your Acropolis.
From that position you'll command mankind,
And keep them in utter, thorough subjugation:
Just as you do the grasshoppers and locusts.
And if the gods offend you, you'll blockade 'em,
And starve 'em to a surrender.
HOO. In what way?
PEIS. Why thus. Your atmosphere is placed, you see,
In a middle point, just betwixt earth and heaven.
A case of the same kind occurs with us.
Our people in Athens, if they send to Delphi
With deputations, offerings, or what not,
Are forced to obtain a pass from the Bœotians:
Thus when mankind on earth are sacrificing,
If you should find the gods grown mutinous
And insubordinate, you could intercept
All their supplies of sacrificial smoke.
HOO. By the earth and all its springs! springes and nooses! †
Odds, nets and snares! This is the cleverest notion:
And I could find it in my heart to venture,
If the other birds agree to the proposal.
PEIS. But who must state it to them?
HOO. You yourself,

---

* The comic poets ridiculed the new prevailing passion for astronomical and physical science. See further on the Parabasis and the scene where Meton the astronomer is introduced.

† The Hoopoe's exclamation and oath are in the original, as they are here represented, exactly in the style of Bob Acres.

They'll understand ye, I found them mere barbarians,
But living here a length of time amongst them,
I have taught them to converse and speak correctly.*

PEIS. How will you summon them?

HOO. That's easy enough;
I'll just step into the thicket here hard by,
And call my nightingale. She'll summon them.
And when they hear her voice, I promise you
You'll see them all come running here pell-mell.†

PEIS. My dearest, best of birds! don't lose a moment,
I beg, but go directly into the thicket;
Nay, don't stand here, go call your nightingale.

[*Exit* HOOPOE.

[*Song from behind the scene, supposed to be sung by the* HOOPOE]

Awake! awake!
Sleep no more, my gentle mate!
With your tiny tawny bill,
Wake the tuneful echo shrill,
On vale or hill;
Or in her airy, rocky seat,
Let her listen and repeat
The tender ditty that you tell,
The sad lament,
The dire event,
To luckless Itys that befell.
Thence the strain
Shall rise again,
And soar amain,

* The characteristic impertinence of a predominant people, considering their own language as that which ought to be universally spoken.

† A female performer on the flute, a great favourite of the public and with the poet, after a long absence from Athens engaged to perform in this play, which was exhibited with an unusual recklessness of expense.

Up to the lofty palace gate;
Where mighty Apollo sits in state;
In Jove's abode, with his ivory lyre,
Hymning aloud to the heavenly choir.
While all the gods shall join with thee
In a celestial symphony.

[*A solo on the flute, supposed to be the nightingale's call.*]

PEIS. O Jupiter! the dear, delicious bird!
With what a lovely tone she swells and falls,
Sweetening the wilderness with delicate air.

EU. Hist!

PEIS. What?

EU. Be quiet, can't ye?

PEIS. What's the matter?

EU. The Hoopoe is just preparing for a song.

HOO. Hoop! hoop!
Come in a troop,
Come at a call,
One and all,
Birds of a feather,
All together.
Birds of a humble, gentle bill,
Smooth and shrill,
Dieted on seeds and grain,
Rioting on the furrowed plain,
Pecking, hopping,
Picking, popping,
Among the barley newly sown.
Birds of bolder, louder tone,
Lodging in the shrubs and bushes,
Mavises and thrushes,
On the summer berries brousing,
On the garden fruits carousing,
All the grubs and vermin smousing.

You that in a humbler station,
With an active occupation,
Haunt the lowly watery mead,
Warring against the native breed,
The gnats and flies, your enemies;
In the level marshy plain
Of Marathon, pursued and slain.

You that in a squadron driving
From the seas are seen arriving,
With the cormorants and mews
Haste to land and hear the news!
All the feathered airy nation,
Birds of every size and station,
Are convened in convocation.
For an envoy, queer and shrewd,
Means to address the multitude,
And submit to their decision
A surprising proposition,
For the welfare of the State
Come in a flurry,
With a hurry-scurry,
Hurry to the meeting and attend to the debate.

The first appearance of the Chorus must have been a critical point for the success of a play. The audience had been brought into good-humour by their favourite musical performer, by whom all the preceding songs were probably executed; for the dialogue on the stage passes solely between Peisthetairus and Euelpides, and the Hoopoe, who is supposed to sing, does not appear. The Chorus now appears, and in the original, forty lines follow, in which Peisthetairus and Euelpides act as showmen to the exhibition of twenty-four figures, dressed in imitation of the plumage of as many different kinds of birds,* which are passed in review with suitable remarks as they

* See what is said in p. 184, of the profuse expense bestowed on the exhibition of this play.

successively take their places in the orchestra. This passage is here omitted. Whoever wishes to see how well it can be executed, may be referred to Mr. Cary's translation.

While the birds are bustling about in their new coop of the orchestra, Euelpides contemplates them with surprise, which soon changes to alarm.

The language of the birds consists almost wholly of short syllables, the effect of which it is impossible to imitate in English. Some accents, which are added, may serve to mark the attempt: they are added also to two spondaic lines, of which the imitation is more practicable.

EU. How they thicken, how they muster,
How they clutter, how they cluster!
Now they ramble here and thither,
Now they scramble altogether.
What a fidgeting and clattering!
What a twittering and chattering,
Don't they mean to threaten us? What think ye?

PEIS. Yes, methinks they do.

EU. They're gaping with an angry look against us both.

PEIS. It's very true.

CHOR. Where is he, the mágistrate that assémbled us to delíberate.

HOO. Friends and comrades, here am I, your old associate and ally.

CHOR. What have ye to commúnicate for the bénefit of the Státe.

HOO. A proposal safe and useful, practicable, profitable,
Two projectors are arrived here, politicians shrewd and able.

CHOR. Whee! Whaw! Where? Where?
What? What? What? What? What?

HOO. I repeat it—human envoys are arrived a steady pair,
To disclose without reserve a most stupendous, huge affair.

CHOR. Chief, of all that ever were, the worst, the most unhappy one!
Speak, explain!

HOO. Don't be alarmed!

CHOR. Alas! alas! what have you done?

HOO. I've received a pair of strangers, who desired to settle here.

CHOR. Have you risked so rash an act?

HOO. I've done it, and I persevere.

CHOR. But, where are they?

HOO. Near beside you; near as I am; very near.

CHOR. Oút alás! oút alás!
We are betráyed, crúelly betrayed
To a calámitous end,
Our cómrade and our friénd,
Our compánion in the fiélds and in the pástures
Is the aúthor of all our míseries and dísasters.
Our áncient sácred láws and sólemn oáth!
Tránsgréssing bóth!
Tréasonably delívering us as a prize
To our hórrible immemórial enemiés,
To a detéstable ráce
Exécrably base!
For the bird our chief, hereafter he must answer to the State;
With respect to these intruders, I propose, without debate,
On the spot to tear and hack them.

EU. There it is, our death and ruin!
Ah, the fault was all your own, you know it; it was all your doing;
You that brought me here; and why?

PEIS. Because I wanted an attendant.

EU. Here, to close my life in tears.

PEIS. No, thats a foolish fear, depend on't.

Eu. Why a foolish fear?

Peis. Consider; when you're left without an eye,
It's impossible in nature; how could you contrive to cry?

Chor. Form in rank, form in rank;
Then move forward and outflank:
Let me see them overpowered,
Hacked, demolished and devoured;
Neither earth, nor sea, nor sky,
Nor woody fastnesses on high,
Shall protect them if they fly?
Where's the Captain? What detains him? What prevents us to proceed?
On the right there, call the Captain! Let him form his troop and lead.

Eu. There it is, where can I fly?

Peis. Sirrah, be quiet, wait a bit.

Eu. What, to be devoured amongst them!

Peis. Will your legs or will your wit
Serve to escape them?

Eu. I can't tell.

Peis. But I can tell; do as you're bid;
Fight we must; you see the pot, just there before ye; take the lid,
And present it for a shield; the spit will serve you for a spear;
With it you may scare them off, or spike them if they venture near.

Eu. What can I find to guard my eyes?

Peis. Why there's the very thing you wish,
Two vizard helmets ready made, the cullender and skimming dish.

Eu. What a clever, capital, lucky device, sudden and new!
Nicias* with all his tactics, is a simpleton to you.

* Nicias was at this time in the chief command of the Sicilian expedition, Alcibiades having been recalled. See note to p. 187.

CHOR. Steady, birds! present your beaks! in double time, charge and attack,
Pounce upon them, smash the potlid, clapperclaw them, tear and hack.

HOO. Tell me, most unworthy creatures, scandal of the feathered race;
Must I see my friends and kinsmen massacred before my face?

CHOR. What, do you propose to spare them? where will your forbearance cease,
Hesitating to destroy destructive creatures such as these?

HOO. Enemies they might have been; but here they come, with fair design,
With proposals of advice, for your advantage and for mine.

CHOR. Enemies time out of mind! they that have spilt our fathers' blood,
How should they be friends of ours, or give us counsel for our good?

HOO. Friendship is a poor adviser; politicians deep and wise
Many times are forced to learn a lesson from their enemies;
Diligent and wary conduct is the method soon or late
Which an adversary teaches; whilst a friend or intimate
Trains us on to sloth and ease, to ready confidence; to rest,
In a careless acquiescence; to believe and hope the best.
Look on earth!* behold the nations, all in emulation vieing,
Active all, with busy science engineering, fortifying;
To defend their hearths and homes, with patriotic industry,
Fencing every city round with massy walls of masonry:

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* The vast changes and improvement in the practice and the art of war which took place about this time were a subject of general speculation and remark. The concise allusions in the text, are therefore somewhat enlarged in the translation.

Tactical devices old they modify with new design;
Arms offensive and defensive to perfection they refine;
Galleys are equipped and armed, and armies trained to discipline.
Look to life, in every part; in all they practise, all they know;
Every nation has derived its best instruction from the foe.

CHOR. We're agreed to grant a hearing; if an enemy can teach
Anything that's wise or useful, let him prove it in his speech.

PEIS. [*aside*]. Let's retire a pace or two; you see the change in their behaviour.

HOO. Simple justice I require, and I request it as a favour.

CHOR. Faith and equity require it, and the nation hitherto
Never has refused to take direction and advice from you.

PEIS. [*aside*]. They're relenting by degrees;
Recover arms and stand at ease.

CHOR.* Back to the rear! resume your station,
Ground your wrath and indignation!
Sheathe your fury! stand at ease,
While I proceed to question these:
What design has brought them here?
Ho, there, Hoopoe! can't he hear?

HOO. What's your question?

CHOR. Who are these?

HOO. Strangers from the land of Greece.

CHOR. What design has brought them thence?
What's their errand or pretence?

HOO. They come here simply with a view
To settle and reside with you;
Here to remain and here to live.

---

* Thirteen lines, which unaccompanied by the action on the stage would appear tiresome and unmeaning, are here omitted from 387 to 400.

CHOR. What is the reason that they give?
Hoo. A project marvellous and strange.
CHOR. Will it account for such a change,
Coming here so vast a distance?
Does he look for our assistance
To serve a friend or harm a foe?
Hoo. Mighty plans he has to show
(Hinted and proposed in brief)
For a power beyond belief;
Ocean, earth, he says, and air,
All creation everywhere,
Everything that's here or there,
An empire and supremacy
Over all beneath the sky,
Is attainable by you,
Your just dominion and your due.
CHOR. Tell us, was he fool or mad?
Hoo. No, believe me; grave and sad.
CHOR. Did his reasons and replies
Mark him as discreet and wise?
Hoo. With a force, a depth, a reach
Of judgment; a command of speech;
An invention, a facility,
An address, a volubility,
More than could be thought believable;
'Tis a varlet inconceivable!
CHOR. Let us hear him! let us hear him!
Bid him begin! for raised on high
Our airy fancy soars; and I
Am rapt in hope; ready to fly.

The King Hoopoe now gives some orders in a pacific spirit, directing that all warlike weapons be removed and hung up at the back of the chimney as before. He then calls upon Peisthetairus to communicate to the assembled commonalty the propositions which had been before discussed in private conference between themselves. Peisthe-

tairus, however, sees his advantage and insists upon the previous conclusion of a formal treaty of peace: this is done, and the Chorus swear to it (relapsing for a moment into their real character) "as they hope to win the prize by a unanimous vote." But if they should fail they imprecate upon themselves the penalty of (gaining the prize notwithstanding, but) "gaining it only by a casting vote." Peace is proclaimed, the armament is dissolved by proclamation, and the Chorus recommenced singing.

[*to the* CHORUS]

HOO. Here you, take these same arms, in the name of heaven,
And hang them quietly in the chimney corner;
[*turning to* PEISTHETAIRUS]
And you communicate your scheme, exhibiting
Your proofs and calculations—the discourse
Which they were called to attend to.

PEIS. No, not I!
By Jove; unless they agree to an armistice;
Such as the little poor baboon, our neighbour,
The sword cutler, concluded with his wife;
That they sha'n't bite me, or take unfair advantage
In any way.

CHOR. We won't.

PEIS. Well, swear it then!

CHOR. We swear; by our hope of gaining the first prize,
With the general approval and consent,
Of the whole audience, and of all the judges —
And if we fail, may the reproach befall us,
Of gaining it, only by the casting vote.

It should seem that the success of this play must have been a subject of more than usual anxiety both to the poet himself, and to the Choregus * and his friends: we may conceive it to have been intended as a sedative to the mind of the commonalty, excited as they were at

* The wealthy citizen charged with the expense and management of a theatrical entertainment.

the time, almost to madness by the suspicion of a conspiracy against the religion and laws of the country; a suspicion originating in a profane outrage secretly perpetrated, to a great extent, in mere insolence and wantonness, by some young men of family. In the opinion, however, of the Athenian people, the offence was viewed in a very serious light, as the result of an extensive secret combination (on the part of persons bound and engaged to each other by their common participation in the guilt of sacrilege), preparatory to other attempts still more criminal and dangerous. In this state of things, and while the popular fury and jealousy upon religious subjects was at its height, the poet ventured to produce this play; in which it will be seen, that the burlesque of the national mythology is carried higher and continued longer than in any of his other existing plays. The confident hopes expressed by the Chorus were not realized; the first prize was assigned to a play the title of which, the "Comastæ," or "Drunken Rioters," seems to imply that its chief interest must have been derived from direct allusions to the outrage above mentioned, and to the individuals suspected to have been engaged in it.

But we must return to the Herald dismissing the troops.

HER. Hear, ye good people all! the troop are ordered,
To take their arms within doors; and consult
On the report and entry to be made
Upon our journal of this day's proceedings.

CHOR. Since time began
The race of man
Has ever been deceitful, faithless ever.
Yet may our fears be vain!
Speak therefore and explain:
If in this realm of ours,
Your clearer intellect, searching and clever,
Has noticed means or powers,
Unknown and undetected,
In unambitious indolence neglected.
Guide and assist our ignorant endeavour:
You for your willing aid, and ready wit,
Will share with us the common benefit.

Now speak to the business and be not afraid
The birds will adhere to the truce that we made.

The long series of anapæstic lines which follows, holds the place of the debates which occur in other comedies, and which are conducted in anapæstic verse. Peisthetairus could not properly have been matched with an opponent or antagonist; the uniformity of his speech is, however, relieved by the interruptions and comments of Euelpides, who acts an under part to him, much in the same style as a merry-andrew to a mountebank. Observe that Peisthetairus never vouchsafes an answer or takes any kind of notice of his companion, but proceeds continuously, except once or twice in reply to the Chorus and the Hoopoe.

PEIS. I'm filled with the subject and long to proceed,
My rhetorical leaven is ready to knead.
Boy, bring me a crown * and a basin and ewer.
EU. Why, what does he mean? Are we banqueting sure?
PEIS. A rhetorical banquet, I mean; and I wish
To serve them at first with a sumptuous dish,
To astound and delight them.† "The grief and compassion
That oppresses my mind on beholding a nation
A people of sovereigns . . . ."
CHOR. Sovereigns we!
PEIS. Of all the creation! of this man and me,
And of Jupiter too; for observe that your birth
Was before the old Titans, and Saturn and Earth.
CHOR. And Earth!
PEIS. I repeat it.
CHOR. That's wonderful news!
PEIS. Your wonder implies a neglect to peruse,
And examine old Æsop; from whom you might gather,

* A crown was worn by the public orators when haranguing the people, and also at feasts.

† The inverted commas mark the premeditatedly abrupt exordium of Peisthetairus's harangue.

That the lark was embarrassed to bury his father;
On account of the then non-existence of Earth;
And how to repair so distressing a dearth,
He adopted a method unheard of and new.

CHOR. If the story you quote, is authentic and true,
No doubt can exist of our clear seniority;
And the gods must acknowledge our right to authority.

EU. Your beaks will be worn with distinction and pride;
The woodpecker's title will scarce be denied;
And Jove the pretender, will surely surrender.

PEIS. . . . . Moreover, most singular facts are combined
In proof, that the birds were adored by mankind:
For instance; the cock was a sovereign of yore
In the empire of Persia, and ruled it before
Darius's time; and you all may have heard,
That his title exists, as the "Persian bird." . . .

EU. And hence you behold him stalk in pride,
Majestic and stout, with a royal stride,
With his turban upright, a privilege known
Reserved to kings and kings alone.

PEIS. . . . . So wide was his empire, so mighty his sway,
That the people of earth to the present day,
Attend to his summons and freely obey:
Tinkers, tanners, cobblers, all,
Are roused from rest at his royal call,
And shuffle their shoes on before it is light,
To trudge to the workshop.

EU. I warrant you're right;
I know to my cost, by the cloak that I lost;
It was owing to him I was robbed and beguiled.
For a feast had been made for a neighbour's child,
To give it a name; and I went as a guest,
And sat there carousing away with the rest;
But drinking too deep, I fell soundly asleep;
And he began crowing; and I never knowing,

But thinking it morning, went off at the warning,
(With the wine in my pate, to the city gate
And fell in with a footpad was lying in wait,
Just under the town; and was fairly knocked down;
Then I tried to call out; but before I could shout,
He stripped me at once with a sudden pull,
Of a bran new mantle of Phrygian wool.

PEIS. . . . . Then the kite was the monarch of Greece heretofore . . . .

HOO. Of Greece?

PEIS. . . . . and instructed our fathers of yore,
On beholding a kite, to fall down and adore . . . .

EU. Well, a thing that befell me, was comical quite,
I threw myself down on beholding a kite;
But turning my face up to stare at his flight,
With a coin in my mouth,* forgetting my penny,
I swallowed it down, and went home without any.

PEIS. . . . . In Sidon and Egypt the cuckoo was king;
They wait to this hour for the cuckoo to sing;
And when he begins, be it later or early,
They reckon it lawful to gather their barley . . . .

EU. Ah, thence it comes our harvest cry,
Cuckoo, Cuckoo, to the passers-by.

PEIS. . . . . At an era moreover of modern date,
Menelaus the king, Agamemnon the great,
Had a bird as assessor attending in state,
Perched on his sceptre, to watch for a share
Of fees and emoluments, secret or fair.

EU. Ah, there I perceive, I was right in my guess,
For when Priam appeared in his tragical dress,

* It was usual with the Greeks to put small pieces of silver coin in their mouths, a custom which the turnpike men of Great Britain continued to retain within the recollection of the writer.

The bird on his sceptre, I plainly could see,
Was watching Lysicrates * taking a fee.

PEIS. . . . Nay, Jupiter now that usurps the command,
Appears with an eagle, appointed to stand
As his emblem of empire; a striking example
Of authority once so extended and ample:
And each of the gods had his separate fowl,
Apollo a hawk, and Minerva an owl.

EU.† That's matter of fact and you're right in the main;
But what was the reason I wish you'd explain?

PEIS. The reason was this: that the bird should be there,
To demand as of right a proportional share,
Of the entrails and fat, when an offering was made,
A suitable portion before them was laid:
Moreover you'll find, that the race of mankind
Always swore by a bird; and it never was heard
That they swore by the gods, at the time that I mention.
And Lampon‡ himself, with a subtle intention,
Adheres to the old immemorial use;
He perjures and cheats us and swears "by the goose."
Thus far forth have I proved and shown
The power and estate that were once your own,
Now totally broken and overthrown:
And need I describe, your present tribe,
Weak, forlorn, exposed to scorn,
Distressed, oppressed, never at rest,
Daily pursued, with outrage rude;

---

* Of Lysicrates, the Scholiast only informs us that he was a person in office known to be in the habit of taking bribes, a description which in relation to those times is hardly a distinction.

† This speech seems more properly to belong to the Hoopoe.

‡ As a substitute for common swearing, some persons (Socrates among the rest) made use of less offensive expletives, swearing "by the dog or by the goose." Lampon was a soothsayer, and thought it right probably to be scrupulous in using the name of the god. He is mentioned again in this play.

With cries and noise, of men and boys,
Screaming, hooting, pelting, shooting,
The fowler sets his traps and nets,
Twigs of bird-lime, loops, and snares,
To catch you kidnapped unawares;
Even within the temple's pale.
They set you forth to public sale,
Pawed and handled most severely:
And not content with roasting merely,
In an insolent device,
Sprinkle you with cheese and spice;
With nothing of respect or favour,
Derogating from your flavour.
Or for a further outrage, have ye
Soused in greasy sauce and gravy.

Hoo. Sad and dismal is the story,
Human stranger which you tell,
Of our fathers' ancient glory,
Ere the fated empire fell,

From the depth of degradation,
A benignant happy fate
Sends you to restore the nation;
To redeem and save the State.

I consign to your protection,
Able to preserve them best,
All my objects of affection,
My wife, my children, and my nest.

If the reader should be inclined to pass over the next hundred lines, I should feel no wish to detain him. The subject of them has been pretty nearly anticipated, and the whole play is in fact too long.

Hoo. Explain then the method you mean to pursue
To recover our empire and freedom anew.

For thus to remain, in dishonour and scorn,
Our life were a burthen no more to be borne.

PEIS. Then I move, that the birds shall in common repair
To a centrical point, and encamp in the air;
And intrench and enclose it, and fortify there:
And build up a rampart, impregnably strong,
Enormous in thickness, enormously long;
Bigger than Babylon; solid and tall,
With bricks and bitumen, a wonderful wall.

EU. Bricks and bitumen! I'm longing to see
What a daub of a building the city will be!

PEIS. As soon as the fabric is brought to an end,
A herald or envoy to Jove we shall send,
To require his immediate prompt abdication;
And if he refuses, or shows hesitation,
Or evades the demand; we shall further proceed,
With legitimate warfare avowed and decreed:
With a warning and notices, formally given,
To Jove, and all others residing in heaven,
Forbidding them ever to venture again
To trespass on our atmospheric domain,
With scandalous journeys, to visit a list
Of Alcmenas and Semeles; if they persist,
We warn them, that means will be taken moreover
To stop their gallanting and acting the lover.
Another ambassador also will go
Despatched upon earth, to the people below,
To notify briefly the fact of accession;
And enforcing our claims upon taking possession:
With orders in future, that every suitor,
Who applies to the gods with an offering made,
Shall begin, with a previous offering paid
To a suitable bird; of a kind and degree
That accords with the god, whosoever he be.
In Venus's fane, if a victim is slain,

First let a sparrow be feasted with grain.
When gifts and oblations to Neptune are made,
To the drake let a tribute of barley be paid.
Let the cormorant's appetite* first be appeased
And let Hercules then have an ox for his feast.
If you offer to Jove, as the sovereign above,
A ram for his own; let the golden-crown,
As a sovereign Bird, be duly preferred,
Feasted and honoured, in right of his reign;
With a jolly fat pismire offered and slain.

EU. A pismire, how droll! I shall laugh till I burst!
Let Jupiter thunder, and threaten his worst.

HOO. But mankind, will they, think ye, respect and adore,
If they see us all flying the same as before?
They will reckon us merely as magpies and crows.

PEIS. Poh! nonsense, I tell ye—no blockhead but knows
That Mercury flies; there is Iris too;
Homer informs us how she flew:
"Smooth as a dove, she went sailing along."
And pinions of gold, both in picture and song,
To Cupid and Victory fairly belong.

HOO. But Jove's thunder has wings; if he send but a volley,
Mankind for a time may abandon us wholly.

PEIS. What then? we shall raise a granivorous troop,
To sweep their whole crops with a ravenous swoop:
If Ceres is able, perhaps she may deign,
To assist their distress, with a largess of grain. . . . .

EU. No! no! she'll be making excuses, I warrant.

PEIS. Then the crows will be sent on a different errand,

---

* With the writers of the old comedy extreme voracity was the characteristic attribute of Hercules.

To pounce all at once, with a sudden surprise,
On their oxen and sheep, to peck out their eyes,
And leave them stone blind for Apollo to cure:
He'll try it; he'll work for his salary sure!

EU. Let the cattle alone; I've two beeves of my own:
Let me part with them first; and then do your worst.

PEIS. But, if men shall acknowledge your merit and worth,
As equal to Saturn, to Neptune, and Earth,
And to everything else; we shall freely bestow
All manner of blessings.

HOO. Explain them and show.

PEIS. For instance: if locusts arrive to consume
All their hopes of a crop, when the vines are in bloom,
A squadron of owls may demolish them all;
The midges moreover, which canker and gall
The figs and the fruit, if the thrush is employed,
By a single battalion will soon be destroyed.

HOO. But wealth is their object; and how can we grant it?

PEIS. We can point them out mines; and our help will be wanted
To inspect, and direct navigation and trade;
Their voyages all will be easily made,
With a saving of time, and a saving of cost;
And a seaman in future will never be lost.

HOO. How so?

PEIS. We shall warn them: "Now hasten to sail,
Now keep within harbour; your voyage will fail."

EU. How readily then will a fortune be made!
I'll purchase a vessel and venture on trade.

PEIS.* And old treasure concealed will again be revealed;

---

* The want of stability and good faith, both in the Government and individuals, obliged the Greeks to secure their moneyed capital by conceal-

The birds as they know it, will readily show it.
'Tis a saying of old, " My silver and gold
Are so safely secreted, and closely interred,
No creature can know it, excepting a bird."
  EU. I'll part with my vessel, I'll not go aboard;
I'll purchase a mattock and dig up a hoard.
  HOO. We're clear as to wealth; but the blessing of health,
Is the gift of the gods.
  PEIS. It will make so such odds:
If they're going on well, they'll be healthy still,
And none are in health, that are going on ill.
  HOO.* But then for longevity; that is the gift
Of the gods.
  PEIS. But the birds can afford them a lift,
And allow them a century, less or more.
  HOO. How so?
  PEIS. From their own individual store:
They may reckon it fair, to allot them a share;
For old proverbs affirm, that the final term
Of a raven's life exceeds the space
Of five generations of human race.
  HOO.† What need have we then for Jove as a king?
Surely the birds are a better thing!
  PEIS. Surely! surely! First and most,
We shall economize the cost
Of marble domes and gilded gates.

---

ment. Hence the vast collections of ancient coin which appear in the cabinets of antiquarians.

Observe the shallow shatter-brained character of Euelpides.

* The origin of this notion of life being transferable, cannot be accounted for; in the form of a wish, it appears to have been common.

† This speech must belong to the Hoopoe. Aristophanes would not leave the result of the scene to be summed up by such a silly fellow as Euelpides. We see besides, that Peisthetairus replies to it. He never replies to Euelpides.

The birds will live at cheaper rates,
Lodging, without shame or scorn,
In a maple or a thorn;
The most exalted and divine
Will have an olive for his shrine.
We need not run to foreign lands,
Or Ammon's temple in the sands;
But perform our easy vows,
Among the neighbouring shrubs and boughs;
Paying our oblations fairly,
With a pennyworth of barley.

CHOR.* O best of all envoys, suspected before,
Now known and approved, and respected the more;
To you we resign the political lead,
Our worthy director in council and deed.

Elated with your bold design,
I swear and vow:
If resolutely you combine
Your views and interest with mine;
In steadfast councils as a trusty friend,
Without deceit, or guile or fraudful end:
They that rule in haughty state,
The gods ere long shall abdicate
Their high command;
And yield the sceptre to my rightful hand.

Then reckon on us for a number and force;
As on you we rely for a ready resource,
In council and policy, trusting to you,
To direct the design we resolve to pursue.

---

* There can be no doubt that this speech belongs to the Chorus, though it may seem difficult to account for what is said of the sceptre, which it should seem ought rather to belong to the king. The Hoopoe in answer alludes to the inveterate vice of all Choruses—dawdling and inefficiency.

Hoo. That's well, but we've no time, by Jove, to loiter,
And dawdle and postpone like Nicias.*
We should be doing something. First, however,
I must invite you to my roosting place,
This nest of mine, with its poor twigs and leaves.
And tell me what your names are?

PEIS. Certainly;
My name is Peisthetairus.†

Hoo. And your friend?

EU. Euelpides from Thria.

Hoo. Well, you're welcome—
Both of ye.

PEIS. We're obliged.

Hoo. Walk in together.

PEIS. Go first then, if you please.

Hoo. No, pray move forward.

PEIS. But bless me — stop, pray — just for a single moment—
Let's see—do tell me—explain—how shall we manage
To live with you—with a person wearing wings?
Being both of us unfledged?

Hoo. Perfectly well!

PEIS. Yes, but I must observe, that Æsop's fables
Report a case in point; the fox and eagle:
The fox repented of his fellowship;
And with good cause; you recollect the story.‡

---

* The Athenians were at that time disappointed at Nicias's delay, in not advancing immediately against Syracuse.

† Peisthetairus answers like a man of sense. Euelpides like a simpleton, and we see the effect of it on the king's mind. There is a momentary pause in the invitation, before they are both included in it.

‡ Peisthetairus has shown that he is not deficient in valour upon compulsion. But a character of extreme subtlety is always prone to suspicion, and the recollection of an example derived from ancient documents in Æsop's Fables, intimidates him for a moment, and makes him distrustful of the

HOO. Oh! don't be alarmed! we'll give you a certain root
That immediately promotes the growth of wings.

PEIS. Come, let's go in then; Xanthias, do you mind,
And Manodorus* follow with the bundles.

CHOR. Holloh!

HOO. What's the matter?

CHOR. Go in with your party,
And give them a jolly collation and hearty.
But the bird, to the Muses and Graces so dear,
The lovely sweet nightingale, bid her appear,
And leave her amongst us, to sport with us here.

PEIS. O yes, by Jove, indeed you must indulge them; †
Do, do me the favour, call her from the thicket!
For heaven's sake—let me entreat you—bring her here,
And let us have a sight of her ourselves.

HOO.‡ Since it is your wish and pleasure it must be so;
Come here to the strangers, Procne! show yourself!

PEIS. O Jupiter, what a graceful, charming bird!
What a beautiful creature it is!

EU. I'll tell you what;
I could find in my heart to rumple her feathers.

PEIS. And what an attire she wears, all bright with gold!

---

frank invitation of the king. He is then very much ashamed of himself, and, like Bacchus and Master Slender, begins giving orders to his servants, and is importunate and hurried and absurd. Thus the poet, who wanted some lines of strong importunity to mark the entrance of his favourite musician, has contrived to give them to his principal personage, and at the same time to mark his character itself more distinctly, by this momentary failure of his habitual self-possession, originating in the apprehension of having lowered himself in the estimation of his host.

* These slaves do not appear elsewhere in the play; it might be doubted whether they appear here and whether Peisthetairus does not call for them in mere nervous absence of mind.

† With a hurried, nervous eagerness.

‡ With grave good breeding, implying a kind of rebuke to the fussy importunity into which Peisthetairus had fallen.

EU. Well, I should like to kiss her, for my part.

PEIS. You blockhead, with that beak, she'd run you through.

EU. By Jove, then, one must treat her like an egg;
Just clear away the shell and kiss her—thus.

HOO.* Let's go!

PEIS. Go first then, and good luck go with us.
[*Exeunt.*

The actors having left the stage, the Parabasis ought to follow. It is here prefaced in a singular way by a complimentary song from the Chorus, addressed to the favourite female musician.

CHOR. O lovely, sweet companion meet,
From morn to night my sole delight,
My little, happy, gentle mate,
You come, you come, O lucky fate,
Returning here with new delight,†
To charm the sight, to charm the sight,
And charm the ear.
Come then anew combine
Your notes in harmony with mine,
And with a tone beyond compare
Begin your anapæstic air.

The sudden passion for science among the Athenians, and the ridicule of it among the comic poets, has been already noticed.

Much might be said on the subject of the most splendid passage of the Parabasis, and of the philosophic system of which it presents the traces: but this would lead to considerations very remote from the imitation of actual life, and manners and character; which, as constituting the most singular excellence of the author, it has been the object of the translator to illustrate.

Of the Parabasis before us, the merits are well known, and perhaps no passage in Aristophanes has been oftener quoted with admiration.

* Gravely disapproving the liberties which are taken in his presence.

† See what is said in the Preface. She had been engaged for this performance, and was newly arrived.

To bring the most sublime subjects within the verge of Comedy, and to treat of them with humour and fancy, without falling into vulgarity or offending the principles of good taste, seems a task which no poet whom we know of, could have accomplished: though, if we were possessed of the works of Epicharmus, it is possible that we might see other specimens of the same style.

Ye Children of Man! whose life is a span,
Protracted with sorrow from day to day,
Naked and featherless, feeble and querulous,
Sickly, calamitous, creatures of clay!
Attend to the words of the Sovereign Birds,
(Immortal, illustrious, lords of the air)
Who survey from on high, with a merciful eye,
Your struggles of misery, labour, and care.
Whence you may learn and clearly discern
Such truths as attract your inquisitive turn;
Which is busied of late, with a mighty debate,
A profound speculation about the creation,
And organical life, and chaotical strife,
With various notions of heavenly motions,
And rivers and oceans, and valleys and mountains,
And sources of fountains, and meteors on high,
And stars in the sky. We propose by-and-by
(If you'll listen and hear) to make it all clear.
And Prodicus henceforth shall pass for a dunce,
When his doubts are explained and expounded at once.

Before the creation of Æther and Light,
Chaos and Night together were plight,
In the dungeon of Erebus foully bedight.
Nor Ocean, or Air, or substance was there,
Or solid or rare, or figure or form,
But horrible Tartarus ruled in the storm:
At length, in the dreary chaotical closet
Of Erebus old, was a privy deposit,

By Night the primæval in secrecy laid;
A Mystical Egg, that in silence and shade
Was brooded and hatched; till time came about:
And Love, the delightful, in glory flew out,
In rapture and light, exulting and bright,
Sparkling and florid, with stars in his forehead,
His forehead and hair, and a flutter and flare,
As he rose in the air, triumphantly furnished
To range his dominions, on glittering pinions,
All golden and azure, and blooming and burnished:
He soon, in the murky Tartarean recesses,
With a hurricane's might, in his fiery caresses
Impregnated Chaos; and hastily snatched
To being and life, begotten and hatched,
The primitive Birds: but the Deities all,
The celestial Lights, the terrestrial Ball,
Were later of birth, with the dwellers on earth,
More tamely combined, of a temperate kind;
When chaotical mixture approached to a fixture.
Our antiquity proved; it remains to be shown,
That Love is our author, and master alone,
Like him, we can ramble, and gambol and fly
O'er ocean and earth, and aloft to the sky:
And all the world over we're friends to the lover,
And when other means fail, we are found to prevail,
When a peacock or pheasant is sent as a present.
All lessons of primary daily concern,
You have learnt from the Birds, and continue to learn,
Your best benefactors and early instructors;
We give you the warning of seasons returning.
When the cranes are arranged, and muster afloat
In the middle air, with a creaking note,
Steering away to the Lybian sands;
Then careful farmers sow their lands;
The crazy vessel is hauled ashore,

The sail, the ropes, the rudder and oar
Are all unshipped, and housed in store.
  The shepherd is warned, by the kite reappearing,
To muster his flock, and be ready for shearing.
  You quit your old cloak, at the swallow's behest,
In assurance of summer, and purchase a vest.
  For Delphi, for Ammon, Dodona, in fine,
For every oracular temple and shrine,
The Birds are a substitute equal and fair,
For on us you depend, and to us you repair
For counsel and aid, when a marriage is made,
A purchase, a bargain, a venture in trade:
Unlucky or lucky, whatever has struck ye,
An ox or an ass, that may happen to pass,
A voice in the street, or a slave that you meet,
A name or a word by chance overheard,
If you deem it an omen, you call it a *Bird*:
And if birds are your omens, it clearly will follow,
That birds are a proper prophetic Apollo.

  Then take us as gods, and you'll soon find the odds,*
We'll serve for all uses, as Prophets and Muses;
We'll give ye fine weather, we'll live here together;
We'll not keep away, scornful and proud, a top of a cloud,
(In Jupiter's way); but attend every day,
To prosper and bless, all you possess,
And all your affairs, for yourselves and your heirs.
And as long as you live, we shall give
You wealth and health, and pleasure and treasure,
In ample measure;

* The series of short lines at the end of a Parabasis was to be repeated with the utmost volubility and rapidity—as if in a single breath. A comic effect is sometimes produced in this way on our own stage.

And never bilk you of pigeon's milk,
Or potable gold; you shall live to grow old,
In laughter and mirth, on the face of the earth,
Laughing, quaffing, carousing, bousing,
Your only distress, shall be the excess
Of ease and abundance and happiness.

SEMICHORUS.

We see here a comic imitation of the tragic choruses of Phrynichus, a poet older than Æschylus, of whom Aristophanes always speaks with respect, as an improver of music and poetry—arts which in the judgment of the ancients were deemed inseparable; or if disjoined, essentially defective and imperfect.

Muse, that in the deep recesses
Of the forest's dreary shade,
Vocal with our wild addresses;
Or in the lonely lowly glade,
Attending near, art pleased to hear,
Our humble bill tuneful and shrill.

When, to the name of omnipotent Pan,
Our notes we raise, or sing in praise,
Of mighty Cybele, from whom we began;
Mother of Nature, and every creature,
Winged or unwinged, of birds or man.
Aid and attend, and chant with me
The music of Phrynichus, open and plain,
The first that attempted a loftier strain,
Ever busy like the bee, with the sweets of harmony.

EPIRREMA.

Is there any person present sitting a spectator here,
Who desires to pass his time, freely without restraint or fear?
Should he wish to colonize; he never need be checked or chid,
For the trifling indiscretions, which the testy laws forbid.

Parricides are in esteem: among the birds we deem it fair,
A combat honourably fought betwixt a game-cock and his heir!
There the branded runagate, branded and mottled in the face,
Will be deemed a motley bird; a motley mark is no disgrace.
Spintharus, the Phrygian born, will pass a muster there with ease,
Counted as a Phrygian fowl; and even Execestides,*
Once a Carian and a slave, may there be nobly born and free;
Plume himself on his descent, and hatch a proper pedigree.

SEMICHORUS.

This second sample of the style of Phrynichus may serve to give us a more distinct idea of it. It seems to have been one of essential grandeur and harmony, but trespassing occasionally into the regions of nonsense.

Thus the swans in chorus follow,
On the mighty Thracian stream,
Hymning their eternal theme.
Praise to Bacchus and Apollo:
The welkin rings, with sounding wings,
With songs and cries and melodies;
Up to the thunderous Æther ascending:

Whilst all that breathe, on earth beneath,
The beasts of the wood, the plain and the flood,
In panic amazement are crouching and bending;

---

* Already noted as a foreigner in the first scene of this play.

With the awful qualm, of a sudden calm,
Ocean and air in silence blending.
The ridge of Olympus is sounding on high,
Appalling with wonder the lords of the sky,
And the Muses and Graces
Enthroned in their places,
Join in the solemn symphony.

ANTEPIRREMA.

Nothing can be more delightful than the having wings to wear!
A spectator sitting here, accommodated with a pair,
Might for instance (if he found a tragic chorus dull and heavy)
Take his flight, and dine at home; and if he did not choose to leave ye,
Might return in better humour, when the weary drawl was ended.
Introduce then wings in use—believe me, matters will be mended:
Patroclides* would not need to sit there, and befoul his seat;
Flying off he might return, eased in a moment, clean and neat.
Trust me wings are all in all! Diitrephes has mounted quicker
Than the rest of our aspirants, soaring on his wings of wicker:

* The posthumous celebrity of Patroclides is not confined to this single event. He survived the accident many years, and was the author of a very salutary decree upon the principles advocated by the poet in the Epirrema of "The Frogs," but (as in the instance before us) he was again fatally too late. The decree was not passed till after the destruction of the navy at Ægos Potamos.

Basket work, and crates, and hampers, first enabled him to
fly; *
First a captain, then promoted to command the cavalry;
With his fortunes daily rising, office and preferment new,
An illustrious, enterprising, airy, gallant cockatoo.

The exclusive functions of the Chorus being now at an end, the persons of the drama appear again upon the stage; Peisthetairus and Euelpides, having been both in the meanwhile equipped with a sumptuous pair of wings. They are supposed to have been entertained behind the scenes, with a royal collation in the palace of the Hoopoe. Peisthetairus is accordingly in extreme good-humour, and being now in the height of his advancement, recollects that it will be right to behave to his former comrade with the hearty familiarity of an old acquaintance; he accordingly begins, with a ludicrous simile† on his appearance (a species of raillery common among the Athenians, but which was considered as the lowest species of jocularity). He takes his friend's retort in perfect good-humour, and Euelpides is admitted as a third person, to consult, with him and the king, upon some unimportant matters—such as the name of the new city, and the choice of a patron Deity—upon all which topics, his idle buffoonish humour is not misplaced: but a more delicate point is afterwards brought into discussion (nothing less than the choice of a chief commander for the citadel) which Euelpides treats with the same silly drollery as before. Peisthetairus is irritated, or pretends to be so, and dismisses him in a tone of authority, which the other resents, and appears on the point of mutinying; upon which Peisthetairus smooths him down again, as briefly as possible, and having accomplished this point, immediately turns away from him, to call a servant.

PEIS. Well, there it is! Such a comical set out,
By Jove, I never saw!
EU. Why, what's the matter?
What are you laughing at?

* His property consisted in a manufactory of this kind, by which he had grown rich.

† This is the sort of raillery which Bacchus prohibits in the contest between Euripides and Æschylus, and of which we have a specimen in "The Wasps," v. 1308. Some modern traveller has told us that abusive similes in alternate extempore verse, serve for an amusement, at this day, to the boatmen of the Nile.

PEIS. At your pen feathers:
I'll tell ye exactly now, the thing you're like;
You're just the perfect image of a goose,
Drawn with a pen in a writing master's flourish.
EU. And you're like a plucked blackbird to a tittle.
PEIS. Well then, according to the line in Æschylus,
"It's our own fault, the feathers are our own." *
EU. Come, what's to be done.
HOO. First, we must choose a name,
Some grand sonorous name, for our new city:
Then we must sacrifice.
EU. I think so too.
PEIS. Let's see—let's think of a name—what shall it be?
What say ye, to the Lacedæmonian name?
Sparta sounds well—suppose we call it Sparta.
EU. Sparta! What *Sparto*? †—Rushes!—no, not I,
I'd not put up with *Sparto* for a mattress,
Much less for a city—we're not come to that.
PEIS. Come then, what name shall it be?
EU. Something appropriate,
Something that sounds majestic, striking and grand,
Alluding to the clouds and the upper regions.
PEIS. What think ye of clouds and cuckoos? Cuckoo-cloudlands
Or Nephelococcugia?
HOO. That will do;
A truly noble and sonorous name
EU. I wonder, if that Nephelococcugia,
Is the same place I've heard of: people tell me,

* Æschylus alludes to a fable in which an eagle complains of being wounded by an arrow feathered from his own wings.

† Sparto still retains its name, and is still used for mattresses and occasionally for cordage.

That all Theagenes's rich possessions
Lie there; and Æschines's whole estate.

PEIS. Yes! * and a better country it is by far,
Than all that land in Thrace, the fabulous plain
Of Phlegra; where those earthborn landed giants
Were bullied and out-vapoured by the gods.

EU. It will be a genteelish, smart concern, I reckon,
This city of ours . . . . Which of the deities
Shall we have for a patron? We must weave our mantle,
Our sacred mantle of course . . . . the yearly mantle †
To one or other of 'em.

PEIS. Well, Minerva?
Why should not we have Minerva? she's established,
Let her continue; she'll do mighty well.

EU. No—there I object; for a well-ordered city,
The example would be scandalous; to see
The goddess, a female born, in complete armour
From head to foot; and Cleisthenes ‡ with a distaff.

PEIS. What warden will ye appoint for the Eagle tower,
Your citadel, the fort upon the rock?

HOO. That charge will rest with a chief of our own choice,
Of Persian race, a chicken of the game,
An eminent warrior.

EU. Oh my chicky-hiddy—
My little master. I should like to see him,
Strutting about and roosting on the rock.

---

* Many Athenians (as Miltiades, Alcibiades, and Thucydides the historian) were proprietors of large estates in the Chersonese and along the coasts of Thrace: Theagenes, it seems, and Æschines, boasting of wealth which they did not possess, chose to talk of their estates in Thrace. In the last century the West Indies was the usual locality assigned to *fabulous* estates. Thrace was also mythologically *fabulous*, as the field of battle between Jupiter and the Titans.

† See "Knights," p. 129, note.

‡ Ridiculed for his effeminacy in various comedies.

PEIS. Come, you now! please to step to the atmosphere;
And give a look to the work, and help the workmen;
And between whiles fetch brick and tiles, and such like;
Draw water, stamp the mortar—do it barefoot;
Climb up the ladders; tumble down again:
Keep constant watch and ward; conceal your watch lights;
Then go the rounds, and give the countersign,
Till you fall fast asleep. Send heralds off,
A brace of them—one to the gods above;
And another, down below there, to mankind.
Bid them, when they return, inquire for me.

EU. For me! for me! You may be hanged for me.

PEIS. Come, friend, go where I bid you; never mind;
The business can't go on without you, anyhow.
It's just a sacrifice to these new deities,
That I must wait for; and the priest that's coming.
Holloh, you boy there! bring the basin and ewer!

In the passage which follows the author ridicules the rage for vulgar realities (a corruption of the theatric art, essentially destructive of all illusion, as we have witnessed at home, with *real* water, *real* horses, *real* elephants). The stage of Athens it should seem had been degraded by a *real* sacrifice, the paltriness of such a spectacle is marked by the magnificent exhortation of the Chorus, contrasted with the meanness of the execution which they anticipate.

CHOR. We urge, we exhort you, and advise,
To ordain a mighty sacrifice;
And before the gods to bring
A stupendous offering;
Either a sheep or some such thing!
To please the critics of the age,
Sacrificed upon the stage.
Sound amain the Pythian strain!
Let Chœris* be brought here to sing.

* Chœris, a bad musician (the constant butt of the comic poets), is called for, to complete the shabbiness of the performance. His representative, they

PEIS. Have done there with your puffing . . . . heaven and earth,
What's here! I've seen a many curious things,
But never saw the like of this before,
A crow with a flute and a mouthpiece. Priest, your office:
Perform it! Sacrifice to the new deities!

PRI. I will — but where's the boy gone with the basket?

Let us pray to the holy flame,
And the holy hawk that guards the same;
To the sovereign deities,
All and each, of all degrees,
Female and male!

CHOR. Hail, thou hawk of Sunium, hail!

PRI. To the Delian and the Pythian swan,
And to the Latonian quail,
All hail!

CHOR. To the bird of awful stature,
Mother of gods, mother of man;
Great Cybele! nurse of Nature!
Glorious ostrich, hear our cry!
Fearful and enormous creature,
Hugest of all things that fly,
O preserve and prosper us,
Thou mother of Cleocritus! *
Grant the blessings that we seek,
For us, and for the Chians' eke!

PEIS. That's right, the Chians—don't forget the Chians!

PRI. To the heroes, birds, and heroes' sons,
We call at once, we call and cry,
To the woodpecker, the jay, the pie,

---

crow (who is the Chœris among the birds), sounds some discordant notes till Peisthetairus stops him.

* Of Cleocritus nothing is known, except that he was unfortunate in his figure, which was thought to resemble that of an ostrich.

To the mallard and the wigeon,
To the ringdove and the pigeon,
To the petrel and sea-mew,
To the dottrel and curlew,
To the vultures and the hawks,
To the cormorants and storks,
To the rail, to the quail,
To the peewít, to the tomtít,

Peisthetairus, who can do everything better than everybody else, undertakes to perform the sacrifice. This is sufficiently in character. By making him the chief operator, a greater comic effect is given to the series of interruptions which disturb him; until in despair he determines to transfer the sacrifice elsewhere. In this way the poet avoids the vulgar reality which he had before ridiculed.

PEIS. Have done there! call no more of 'em; are you mad?
Inviting all the cormorants and vultures,
For a victim such as this! Why don't you see,
A kite at a single swoop, would carry it off?
Get out of my way there with your crowns and fillets,
I'll do it myself! I'll make the sacrifice!

PRI. Then must I commence again,
In a simple, humble strain;
And invite the gods anew,
To visit us—but very few—
Or only just a single one,
All alone,
In a quiet, easy way;
Wishing you may find enough,*
If you dine with us to-day.
Our victim is so poor and thin,
Merely bones, in fact, and skin.

PEIS. We sacrifice and pray to the winged deities.

* Ridicule of the vulgar reality, the poor half-starved sheep being standing on the stage.

Enter a Poet, very ragged and shabby, with a very mellifluous submissive mendicatory demeanour. Peisthetairus, the essential man of business and activity, entertaining a supreme contempt for his profession and person, is at no great pains to conceal it; but recollecting at the same time, that it is advisable to secure the suffrages of the literary world, and that the character of a patron is creditable to a great man, he patronizes him accordingly, not at his own expense, but by bestowing upon him certain articles of apparel put in requisition for that purpose. This first act of confiscation is directed against the property of the Church; the Scholiast informs us, that he begins by stripping the Priest.

POET. "For the festive, happy day,
Muse prepare an early lay,
To Nephelococcugia."

PEIS. What's here to do? What are you? Where do you come from?

POET. An humble menial of the Muses' train,
As Homer expresses it.

PEIS. A menial, are you?
With your long hair? * A menial?

POET. 'Tis not that,
No! but professors of the poetical art,
Are simply styled, the "Menials of the Muses,"
As Homer expresses it.

PEIS. Aye, the Muse has given you
A ragged livery. Well, but friend, I say—
Friend!—Poet!—What the plague has brought you here?

POET. I've made an ode upon your new built city,
And a charming composition for a chorus,
And another, in Simonides's manner.

PEIS.† When were they made? What time? How long ago?

---

* Slaves were forbidden to wear long hair.
† In a sharp, cross, examining tone.

POET. From early date, I celebrate in song,
The noble Nephelococcugian State.

PEIS. That's strange, when I'm just sacrificing here,
For the first time, to give the town a name.

POET. Intimations, swift as air,
To the Muses' ear, are carried,
Swifter than the speed and force,
Of the fiery-footed horse,
Hence, the tidings never tarried;
Father, patron, mighty lord,*
Founder of the rising State,
What thy bounty can afford,
Be it little, be it great,
With a quick resolve, incline
To bestow on me and mine.

PEIS. This fellow will breed a bustle, and make mischief,
If we don't give him a trifle, and get rid of him.
You there, you've a spare waistcoat; pull it off!
And give it this same clever, ingenious poet—
There, take the waistcoat, friend! Ye seem to want it!

POET. Freely, with a thankful heart,
What a bounteous hand bestows,
Is received in friendly part;
But amid the Thracian snows,
Or the chilly Scythian plain,
He the wanderer, cold and lonely,
With an under-waistcoat only,
Must a further wish retain;
Which, the Muse averse to mention,
To your gentle comprehension,
Trusts her enigmatic strain.

---

* The Scholiast informs us that these lines are in ridicule of certain mendicatory passages in the Odes of Pindar; one in particular, addressed to Hiero on the foundation of a new city.

PEIS. I comprehend it enough; you want a jerkin;
Here, give him yours; one ought to encourage genius.
There, take it, and good-by to ye!

POET.* Well, I'm going;
And as soon as I get to the town, I'll set to work;
And finish something, in this kind of way.

"Seated on your golden throne,
Muse, prepare a solemn ditty,
To the mighty,
To the flighty,
To the cloudy, quivering, shivering,
To the lofty-seated city."

PEIS. Well, I should have thought, that jerkin might have cured him
Of his "quiverings and shiverings." How the plague!
Did the fellow find us out? I should not have thought it.
Come, once again, go round with the basin and ewer.
Peace! Silence! Silence!

Enter a Soothsayer with a great air of arrogance and self-importance. He comes on the authority of a book of Oracles (which he pretends to possess, but which he never produces), in virtue of which he lays claim to certain sacrificial perquisites and fees. Peisthetairus encounters him with a different version composed upon the spot; in virtue of which he dismisses the Soothsayer with a good lashing.

SOOTH. Stop the sacrifice!

PEIS. What are you?

SOOTH. A Soothsayer, that's what I am.

PEIS. The worse luck for ye.

SOOTH. Friend, are you in your senses?†
Don't trifle absurdly with religious matters.

---

* The Poet withdraws, gradually turning round and reciting. Peisth. does not appear to take notice, but watches till he is fairly gone.

† See p. 154 of "The Knights," where there is the same allusion to disputes on the authentic copies of oracles.

Here's a prophecy of Bakis, which expressly
Alludes to Nephelococcugia.

PEIS. How came it, then, you never prophesied
Your prophecies before the town was built?

SOOTH. The spirit withheld me.

PEIS. And is it allowable now,
To give us a communication of them?

SOOTH. Hem!

"Moreover, when the crows and daws unite,
To build and settle, in the midway right,
Between tall Corinth and fair Sicyon's height,
Then to Pandora, let a milk white goat
Be slain, and offered, and a comely coat
Given to the Soothsayer, and shoes a pair;
When he to you this Oracle shall bear."

PEIS. Are the shoes mentioned?

SOOTH. [*pretending to feel for his papers*]. Look at the book, and see!

"And let him have the entrails for his share."

PEIS. Are the entrails mentioned?

SOOTH. [*as before*]. Look at the book, and see!

"If you, predestined youth, shall do these things,
Then you shall soar aloft, on eagle's wings;
But, if you do not, you shall never be
An eagle, nor a hawk, nor bird of high degree."

PEIS. Is all this, there?

SOOTH. [*as before*]. Look at the book, and see!

PEIS. This Oracle differs most remarkably,
From that which I transcribed in Apollo's temple.

"If at the sacrifice . . . . * which you prepare,
An uninvited vagabond . . . . should dare

---

* The breaks in the text . . . . may serve to indicate what was more distinctly expressed by the actor—viz., that Peisthetairus's Oracle is an extempore production.

To interrupt you, and demand a share,
Let cuffs and buffets . . . . be the varlet's lot.
Smite him between the ribs . . . . and spare him not."

SOOTH. Nonsense, you're talking!

PEIS. [*with the same action as the* SOOTHSAYER, *as if he were feeling for papers*]. Look at the book, and see!

"Thou shalt in no wise heed them, or forbear
To lash and smite those eagles of the air,
Neither regard their names, for it is written,
Lampon and Diopithes shall be smitten."

SOOTH. Is all this, there?

PEIS. [*producing a horsewhip*]. Look at the book, and see!
Get out! with a plague and a vengeance.

SOOTH. Oh dear! oh!

PEIS. Go soothsay somewhere else, you rascal, run!

[*Exit* SOOTH.

Meton the Astronomer appears, encumbered with a load of mathematical instruments, which are disposed about his person. He advances with short steps, a straight back, and his chin in the air, modifying, by what he conceives to be a tone of condescending familiarity, a manner of habitual self-importance.

MET. I'm come, you see, to join you.

PEIS. [*aside*]. (Another plague!)
For what? What's your design? Your plan, your notion?
Your scheme—your apparatus—your equipment—
Your outfit? What's the meaning of it all?

MET. I mean to take a geometrical plan
Of your atmosphere—to allot it, and survey it
In a scientific form.

PEIS. In the name of heaven!
Who are ye and what? What name? What manner of man?

MET. Who am I and what! Meton's my name, well known
In Greece, and in the village of Colonos.

PEIS. But tell me, pray; these implements, these articles,
What are they meant for?*

MET. These are—*Instruments!*
An atmospherical geometrical scale.
First, you must understand, that the atmosphere
Is formed—in a manner—altogether—partly,
In the fashion of a furnace, or a funnel;
I take this circular arc, with the movable arm,
And so, by shifting it round, till it coincides
At the angle;—you understand me?

PEIS. Not in the least.

MET. . . . . I obtain a true division, with the quadrature†
Of the equilateral circle. Here, I trace
Your market-place, in the centre, with the streets—
Converging inwards—! and the roads, diverging—!
From the circular wall, without—! like solar rays
From the circular circumference of the sun.

PEIS. [*in a pretended soliloquy; then calling to him with a tone of mystery and alarm*].
Another Thales! absolutely, a Thales!—
Meton!

MET. [*startled*]. Why, what's the matter?

PEIS. You're aware,
That I've a regard for you. Take my advice;
Don't be seen here—withdraw yourself—abscond!

MET. Is there any alarm or risk?

PEIS. Why, much the same,
As it might be in Lacedæmon. There's a bustle
Of expelling aliens; people are dragged out

* Peist. going up to him and pulling them about.
† Meton with animation and action illustrative of the proposed plan.

From the inns and lodgings, with a deal of uproa
And blows and abuse in plenty, to be met with
In the public street.

MET. A popular tumult—heh?

PEIS.* Oh, fie! no, nothing of that kind.

MET. How do you

PEIS.† We're carrying into effect a resolution
Adopted lately; to discard and cudgel . . .
Coxcombs and mountebanks . . . . of every ki

MET. Perhaps . . . . I had best withdraw.

PEIS. Why, yes, per
But yet, I would not answer for it, neither;
Perhaps, you may be too late; the blows I men
Are coming—close upon you—there they come

MET. Oh, bless me!

PEIS. Did not I tell you, and give y
Get out, you coxcomb, find out by your geomet
The road you came, and measure it back: you'

[A

A Commissioner from Athens advances with an air of i
ascendency; like other consequential persons sent
mission, he wishes it to be understood that he consid
banishment.

COM. Is nobody here? None of the proxen
To receive and attend upon me?

PEIS. What's all th
Sardanapalus‡ in person come amongst us!

COM. I come, appointed as Commissioner
To Nephelococcugia.

PEIS. A Commissioner!
What brings you here?

---

* Peist. scandalized at the supposition.

† During this speech Peisthetairus keeps his eye quietly
Astronomer.

‡ A name proverbial for pomp and luxury.

COM. A paltry scrap of paper,
A trifling, silly decree, that sent me away
Here to this place of yours.

PEIS. Well now! suppose,
To make things easy on both sides—could not you
Just take your salary at once; and so return,
Without any further trouble?

COM. Truly, yes,
I've other affairs at home: a speech and a motion,
That I meant to have made in the general Assembly,
About a business, that I took in hand,
On the part of my friend Pharnaces, the satrap.

PEIS. Agreed then, and farewell. Here, take your salary.

COM. What's here?

[PEISTHETAIRUS *has held out his left hand, as if with an offer of money; he grasps the right hand of the* COMMISSIONER, *and with this advantage proceeds to buffet him.*]

PEIS. A motion on the part of Pharnaces!

COM. Bear witness here! I'm beaten and abused
In my character of Commissioner! [*Exit* COM.

PEIS. Get out!
With your balloting-box and all. It's quite a shame,
Quite scandalous! They send Commissioners here *
Before we've finished our first sacrifice.

Enter a Hawker with copies of new laws relating to the colony, which he has brought out with him for sale. Like all itinerant vendors of literature, he is trying to attract purchasers by reciting and bawling out select passages from the papers in his hand. The sale of them is his only object; and he is quite unconscious that the specimen which he recites is applicable to an incident which has just occurred. He

* Peisthetairus, in expectation of the Commissioner's return, is working himself into a proper state of wrath, in order to be ready for him. Mere gratuitous complaint would not be suitable to his character.]

enters on the opposite side with the monotonous chant of a vendor of a last dying speech, confronting Peisthetairus, who is returning after having driven out the Commissioner.

HAW. "Moreover, if a Nephelococcugian
Should assault or smite an Athenian citizen" . . . .

PEIS. What's this? What's all this trumpery paper here?

HAW. I've brought you the new laws and ordinances,
And copies of the last decrees to sell.

PEIS. [*drily and bitterly*]. Let's hear 'em.

HAW. "It is enacted and ordained
That the Nephelococcugians shall use
Such standard weights and measures" . . . .

PEIS. Friend, you'll find
Hard *measure* here, and a heavy *weight*, I promise you,
Upon your shoulders shortly.

HAW. What's the matter?
What's come to you?

PEIS. Get out, with your decrees!
I've bloody decrees against you, dire decrees.

[*drives him off.*

COM. [*returning*]. I summon Peisthetairus to his answer,
In an action of assault and battery,
For the first day of the month, Munichion.

PEIS. Ha, say you so? You're there again! Have at you. [*drives him off.*

HAW. [*returning*]. "And in case of any assault or violence,
Against the person of the Magistrate." . . . .

PEIS. Bless me! What you! You're there, again.

[*drives him off.*

COM. [*returning again*]. I'll ruin you;
I'll lay my damages at ten thousand drachmas.

PEIS. In the mean time, I'll smash your balloting-boxes.

COM. Remember, how you effaced the public monument,*
On the pillar, and defiled it late last night.

PEIS. Pah! stuff! There seize him, somebody. What you're off, too.
Come, let's remove, and get away from hence,
And sacrifice our goat, to the gods within doors.

It is to be feared that, without having it pointed out to him, the reader will hardly be aware that in some of the following lines an attempt is made to imitate the effect of the spondaic passages in the original.

CHORUS.

Henceforth—our worth,
Our right—our might,
Shall be shown,
Acknowledged, known;
Mankind shall raise
Prayers, vows, praise,
To the birds alone.
Our employ, is to destroy
The vermin train,
Ravaging amain,
Your fruits and grain:
We're the wardens
Of your gardens,
To watch and chase
The wicked race,
And cut them shorter,
In hasty slaughter.

The first lines of the Epirrema are descriptive of the cruel madness of the times, see note to p. 199. Diagoras was a poet, a foreigner resident

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* The sort of accusations which were current at the time similar to those of the mutilation of the Hermæ. Peisthetairus does not take any notice or bestow a whole line upon his accuser; the last words of the verse are addressed to the Hawker.

at Athens (being suspected of Atheism and consequently of being an accomplice in the imaginary plot), he was proscribed and a price set upon his head; it seems also that, in other instances which are alluded to, assassination was encouraged by public rewards.

The history of a similar period. The times of Titus Oates's plot (admirably described by Roger North in his Examen) may serve to illustrate the lines 13 and 14, the community in both instances remaining subject to a reign of terror under obscure wretches whose sole instrument of dominion was perjury; as it was necessary for those sovereign witnesses to extort respectable subsidiary evidence in support of their main system of perjury, threats and imprisonment were the means employed in both instances, as appears by the narrative of Andocides.

EPIRREMA.

At the present urgent crisis, all your efforts and attention
Are directed to secure Diagoras's apprehension:
Handsome bounties have been offered of a talent for his head
Likewise, with respect to tyrants (tyrants that are gone and dead)
Bounties of a talent each, for all that can be killed or caught:
With a zealous emulation, we, the Birds, have also thought
Just and proper, to proclaim, from this time forth, that we withdraw
From Philocrates, the fowler, the protection of the law:
Furthermore, we fix a price, for bringing him alive or dead,
Four, if he's secured alive; a single talent for his head:
He, that ortolans and quails to market has presumed to bring;
And the sparrows, six a penny, tied together in a string,
With a wicked art retaining, sundry doves in his employ,
Fastened, with their feet in fetters, forced to serve for a decoy;
Farther, we declare and publish our command to men below,

All the birds you keep in prison, to release, and let them go.
We shall, else, revenge ourselves, and we shall teach the
tyrants yet,
How to chirp and dance in fetters, in the tangles of a
net.

CHORUS.

Blest are they,
The birds alway,
With perfect clothing,
Fearing nothing,
Cold or sleet or summer heat.
As it chances,
As he fancies,
Each his own vagary follows,
Dwelling in the dells and hollows
When, with eager weary strain,
The shrilly grasshoppers complain,
Parched upon the sultry plain;
Maddened with the raging heat,
We secure a cool retreat,
In the shady nooks and coves,
Recesses of the sacred groves,
Many a herb, and many a berry
Serves to feast, and make us merry.

ANTEPIRREMA.

To the judges of the prize, we wish to mention in a
word,
The return we mean to make, if our performance is pre-
ferred.
First then, in your empty coffers, you shall see the sterling
owl,*
From the mines of Laurium, familiar as a common fowl;

* The figure of an owl stamped on the coin of Athens.

Roosting among the bags and pouches, each at ease upon his nest;
Undisturbed, rearing and hatching little broods of interest:
If you wish to cheat in office, but are inexpert and raw.
You should have a kite for agent, capable to gripe and claw;
Cranes and cormorants shall help you, to a stomach and a throat;
When you feast abroad, but, if you give a vile, unfriendly vote,
Hasten and provide yourselves, each, with a little silver plate,
Like the statues of the gods, for the protection of his pate;
Else, when forth abroad you ramble, on a summer holiday,
We shall take a dirty vengeance, and befoul your best array.

In the following scene a foot messenger arrives at full speed from the new city, apparently in a state of great exhaustion. He communicates his important intelligence to Peisthetairus in a single gasp of breath—"Your fortification's finished!" The report which he makes of the building of a new Babylon by the nation of the Birds, as it considerably exceeds even that license of assuming impossibilities which is the privilege of the ancient comedy, may lead us to examine the mode of humorous contrivance by which the author has managed in some degree to maintain that balance between truth and falsehood, which I have (in another place) endeavoured to point out as essential to the character of all dramatic representations whether serious or comic.

The interest which we take in the development of moral truth and in the illustration of human character, is so much stronger than that which we attach to mere matter of fact, that where the two are combined (that is to say, where a supposed fact is made the foundation of a new and striking illustration of character), our attention is, generally speaking, wholly directed to the latter, and we are inclined to take the fact for granted; as we allow the scrawl, which a mathematician draws, to stand for a circle or square, our whole attention being absorbed in the acquisition of a general and a permanent truth. It is, we believe, an established axiom in the art of lying that almost

anything may be made credible of almost any person, provided that the imaginary facts are accompanied by a just representation of the behaviour of the person, such as it might be supposed to be under the alleged circumstances; and this will be more strikingly the case, if some trait of his character, not generally observed, but likely to be immediately recognized, is exhibited for the first time. It has been observed elsewhere, of the Aristophanic or ancient comedy, that it is essentially a grave, humorous, impossible "great lie," related with an accurate mimicry of the language and manners of the persons introduced. As the humour of a "narrative lie" is more easily comprehended than that of a dramatic one, we may venture to examine the drama, such as it would have appeared if it had been helped out in some degree by a narrative comment; if, like the explanatory heroic prologue in "Henry the Fifth," the ancient comedy had made use of a buffoonish prologue, explanatory and preparatory to the different scenes. We might suppose Aristophanes or his prolocutor on this occasion to have said: "Gentlemen, the information, which I apprehend you will shortly receive of the progress of the new buildings at Nephelococcugia, may perhaps strike you as extraordinary. I should not be surprised, if, to some amongst you, it should appear little short of being absolutely incredible; but I would not have you rely entirely upon your own judgment. There is Peisthetairus, who has every means of information, and of whose abilities you can have no doubt: you will see him as much astonished as any amongst you; and you will see him so for the first and only time. But, will he disbelieve the fact? Far from it. Like the judicious amongst yourselves, he will not entertain the least doubt of it; on the contrary, unless I am very much mistaken in his character, you will be able to detect evident symptoms of jealousy and uneasiness at the idea of such an object having been accomplished, independently of his direction and superintendence; and indeed, not without reason; for, you will see, that both the Chorus and the Messenger himself appear to abate something of their accustomed respect and deference to him. You will observe likewise, that the Messenger is far from anticipating the slightest incredulity, as to the general fact of the completion of the work of which he himself has been a witness; while he is apparently very anxious in his negative testimony, as to the total absence of any extraneous aid or assistance whatever."

PEISTHETAIRUS.

Well, friends and birds! the sacrifice has succeeded,
Our omens have been good ones: good and fair.

But, what's the meaning of it? We've no news
From the new building yet! No messenger!
Oh! there, at last, I see—there's somebody
Running at speed, and panting like a racer.

[*Enter a Messenger, quite out of breath; and speaking in short snatches.*]

MESS. Where is he? Where? Where is he? Where? Where is he?—
The president Peisthetairus?

PEIS. [*coolly*]. Here am I.

MESS. [*in a gasp of breath*]. Your fortification's finished.

PEIS. Well! that's well.

MESS. A most amazing, astonishing work it is!
So, that Theagenes and Proxenides *
Might flourish and gasconade and prance away,
Quite at their ease, both of them four-in-hand,
Driving abreast upon the breadth of the wall,
Each in his own new chariot.

PEIS. You surprise me.

MESS. And the height (for I made the measurement myself)
Is exactly a hundred fathoms.

PEIS. Heaven and earth!
How could it be? such a mass! who could have built it?

MESS. The Birds; no creature else, no foreigners,
Egyptian bricklayers,† workmen or masons,
But, they themselves, alone, by their own efforts,
(Even to my surprise, as an eye-witness)—
The Birds, I say, completed everything:

---

* Pretenders to great wealth and affecting extraordinary expense and display. See note to p. 222.

† Egyptian labourers are mentioned in "The Frogs."

There came a body of thirty thousand cranes
(I won't be positive, there might be more)
With stones from Africa, in their craws and gizzards,
Which the stone-curlews and stone-chatterers
Worked into shape and finished. The sand-martens
And mud-larks, too, were busy in their department,
Mixing the mortar, while the water birds,
As fast as it was wanted, brought the water
To temper, and work it.

PEIS. [*in a fidget*]. But, who served the masons?
Who did you get to carry it?

MESS. To carry it?
Of course, the carrion crows and carrying pigeons.

PEIS. [*in a fuss, which he endeavours to conceal*].
Yes! yes! But after all, to load your hods,
How did you manage that?

MESS. Oh capitally,
I promise you. There were the geese, all barefoot
Trampling the mortar, and, when all was ready,
They handed it into the hods, so cleverly,
With their flat feet!

PEIS. [*A bad joke, as a vent for irritation* *].
They *footed* it, you mean—
Come; it was handily done though, I confess.

MESS. Indeed, I assure you, it was a sight to see them;
And trains of ducks, there were, clambering the ladders,
With their duck legs, like bricklayer's 'prentices,
All dapper and handy, with their little trowels.

PEIS.† In fact, then, it's no use engaging foreigners,
Mere folly and waste, we've all within ourselves.

---

* Like Falstaff, when he is annoyed and perplexed, joking perforce.

† Peisthetairus is at a loss, unable to think of a new objection, he maintains his importance by a wise observation. As soon as an objection occurs, he states it with great eagerness; but with no better success than before.

Ah, well now, come! But about the woodwork? Heh!
Who were the carpenters? Answer me that!

MESS. The woodpeckers, of course: and there they were,
Labouring upon the gates, driving and banging,
With their hard hatchet beaks, and such a din,
Such a clatter, as they made, hammering and hacking,
In a perpetual peal, pelting away
Like shipwrights, hard at work in the arsenal.
And now their work is finished, gates and all,
Staples and bolts, and bars and everything;
The sentries at their posts; patrols appointed;
The watchmen in the barbican; the beacons
Ready prepared for lighting; all their signals
Arranged—but I'll step out, just for a moment,
To wash my hands. You'll settle all the rest. [*Exit.*

[PEISTHETAIRUS, *surprised at the rapid conclusion of the work, feeling from the volubility and easy manner of the Messenger, the blow which his authority has received; seeing that nothing is left for him to superintend, nothing to direct, nothing to suggest, or to find fault with, remains in an attitude of perplexity and astonishment, with his hands clasped across his forehead.*]

CHOR. [*to* PEISTHETAIRUS, *in a sort of self-satisfied drawling tone*].
Heigh-day! Why, what's the matter with ye? Sure!
Ah! well now, I calculate, you're quite astonished;
You did not know the nature of our birds:
I guess you thought it an impossible thing,
To finish up your fortification job
Within the time so cleverly.

PEIS. [*recovering himself and looking round*]. Yes, truly.
Yes, I'm surprised indeed; I must confess—

I could almost imagine to myself
It was a dream, an illusion, altogether—
But, there's the watchman of the town, I see!
In alarm and haste, it seems! He's running here—

[*The* WATCHMAN *enters, with a shout of alarm*].

—Well, what's the matter?
W. A most dreadful business:
One of the gods, just now—Jupiter's gods—
Has bolted through the gates, and driven on
Right into the atmosphere, in spite of us,
And all the jackdaws, that were mounting guard.
PEIS. [*animated at the prospect of having something to manage*].
What an outrage! what an insult! Which of 'em?
Which of the gods?
W. We can't pretend to say;
We just could ascertain that he wore wings.
We're clear upon that point.
PEIS. But a light party
Ought surely to have been sent in such a case;
A detachment—*
W. A detachment has been sent
Already: a squadron of ten thousand hawks,
Besides a corps of twenty thousand hobby hawks,
As a light cavalry, to scour the country:
Vultures and falcons, ospreys, eagles, all
Have sallied forth; the sound of wings is heard,
Rushing and whizzing round on every side,
In eager search. The fugitive divinity
Is not far off, and soon must be discovered.

* Peisthetairus is exposed to a fresh mortification; the orders which he was ready to give have been anticipated! He contrives, however, to detect an omission, and upon the strength of it to assume a tone of authority and command.

PEIS. Did nobody think of slingers? Where are they?
Where are the slingers got to? Give me a sling.
Arrows and slings, I say!—Make haste with 'em.

CHORUS.

The verses which follow belong to a species of songs, which are alluded to in Aristophanes more than once. They may properly be called "Watch-songs," being sung by the Watchmen and Soldiers on guard, to keep themselves and their comrades awake and alert.

War is at hand,
On air and land,
  Proclaimed and fixt.
War and strife,
Eager and rife,
  Are kindled atwixt
This State of ours,
And the heavenly powers.
  Look with care,
To the circuit of air,
  Watch lest he,
  The deity,
Whatever he be,
  Should unaware
Escape and flee.

But hark! the rushing sound of hasty wings
Approaches us. The deity is at hand.

PEIS. Holloh you! Where are ye flying? Where are ye going?
Hold! Halt! Stop there, I tell ye!—Stop this instant!
What are ye? Where do you come from? Speak, explain.

IRIS. Me? From the gods, to be sure! the Olympian gods.

PEIS. [*pointing to the flaunting appendages of her dress*].*
What are ye? With all your flying trumpery!
A helmet? or a galley? What's your name?

IRIS. Iris, the messenger of the gods.

PEIS. A messenger!
Oh! you're a naval messenger, I reckon,
The Salaminian galley, or the Paralian? †
You're in full sail, I see.

IRIS. What's here to do?

PEIS. Are there no birds in waiting? Nobody
To take her into custody?

IRIS. Me, to custody?
Why, what's all this?

PEIS. You'll find to your cost, I promise ye.

IRIS. Well, this seems quite unaccountable!

PEIS. Which of the gates
Did ye enter at, ye jade? How came you here?

IRIS. Gates!—I know nothing about your gates, not I.

PEIS. Fine innocent ignorant airs, she gives herself!
You applied to the pelicans, I suppose?—The captain
Of the cormorants on guard admitted you?

IRIS. Why, what the plague! what's this?

PEIS. So, you confess!
You come without permission!

IRIS. Are you mad?

PEIS. Did neither the sitting magistrates nor bird-masters
Examine and pass you?

IRIS. Examine me, forsooth!

PEIS. This is the way then!—without thanks or leave

---

* Iris, the rainbow personified, is of course attired in all the colours of the rainbow, with abundance of lappets and streamers.

† The two sacred galleys of the Athenians. The most splendidly equipped were despatched upon the most important occasions. See note, page 187.

You ramble and fly, committing trespasses
In an atmosphere belonging to your neighbours !

IRIS. And where would you have us fly then? Us, the gods !

PEIS. I neither know nor care. But, I know this,
They sha'n't fly here. And another thing, I know.
I know—that, if there ever was an instance
Of an Iris or a rainbow, such as you,
Detected in the fact, fairly condemned,
And justly put to death—it would be you.

IRIS. But, I'm immortal.

PEIS. [*coolly and peremptorily*]. That would make no difference:
We should be strangely circumstanced indeed;
With the possession of a sovereign power,
And you, the gods, in no subordination,
No kind of order ! fairly mutinying,
Infringing and disputing our commands.
—Now then, you'll please to tell me—where you're going?
Which way you're steering with those wings of yours?

IRIS. I? . . . . I'm commissioned from my father Jove,*
To summon human mortals to perform
Their rites and offerings and oblations, due
To the powers above.

PEIS. And who do you mean? what powers?

IRIS. What powers? Ourselves, the Olympian deities !

PEIS. So then ! you're deities, the rest of ye !

IRIS. Yes, to be sure. What others should there be?

PEIS. Remember—! once for all—! that we, the Birds,
Are the only deities, from this time forth;
And, not your father Jove. By Jove ! not he !

---

* Iris, in a great fright, hesitating and hurried, but attempting to assume a tone of authority.

IRIS. Oh! rash, presumptuous wretch! Incense no more
The wrath of the angry gods! lest ruin drive *
Her ploughshare o'er thy mansion; and destruction,
With hasty besom sweep thee to the dust;
Or flaming lightning smite thee with a flash,
Left in an instant smouldering and extinct.

PEIS. Do ye hear her?—Quite in tragedy!—quite sublime!
Come, let me try for a bouncer in return.†
Let's see. Let's recollect. "Me dost thou deem,
Like a base Lydian or a Phrygian slave,
With hyperbolical bombast to scare?
I tell ye, and you may tell him. Jupiter—
If he provokes me, and pushes things too far—
Will see some eagles of mine, to outnumber his,
With firebrands in their claws about his house.
And, I shall send a flight of my Porphyrions.‡
A hundred covey or more, armed cap-a-pie
To assault him in his sublime celestial towers:
Perhaps, he may remember in old times,
He found enough to do with one Porphyrion.
And for you, Madam Iris, I shall strip
Your rainbow-shanks, if you're impertinent,
Depend upon it, and I myself, in person
Will ruin you, myself—! Old as I am.

IRIS. Curse ye, you wretch, and all your filthy words.

PEIS. Come, scuttle away; convey your person elsewhere;
Be brisk, and leave a vacancy. Brush off.

---

* A medley from terrific passages in the tragic poets.

† Peisthetairus at last hits upon a tragic passage which he thinks will serve for a suitable reply. A vulgar line which disfigures a very fine scene of Euripides.

‡ The Greek name for a flamingo, also the name of one of the giants who made war against the gods.

Iris. I shall inform my father. He shall know
Your rudeness and impertinence. He shall,—
He'll settle ye and keep ye in order. You shall see.

Peis. Oh dear! is it come to that! No, you're mistaken,
Young woman, upon that point, I'm not your man,
I'm an old fellow grown; I'm thunder-proof,
Proof against flames and darts and female arts:
You'd best look out for a younger customer.

Poor Iris, in her rage, unwittingly makes use of the same sort of phrase with which a young girl at Athens would repel, or affect to repel, improper familiarities. Peisthetairus, taking advantage of this, pretends to consider her indignation as a mere coquettish artifice intended to inveigle and allure him.

The *Athenian Father*—"I shall inform my father"—may be considered as equivalent to the *Irish Brother*. The menace in one case would imply a duel, in the other a lawsuit.

Chorus.

Notice is hereby given,
To the deities of heaven;
Not to trespass here,
Upon our atmosphere;
Take notice; from the present day,
No smoke or incense is allowed
To pass this way.

Peis. Quite strange it is! quite unaccountable!
That herald to mankind, that was despatched,
What has become of him? He's not yet returned.

[*Enter* Herald.]

Her. O Peisthetairus, happiest, wisest, best,
Cleverest of men! Oh! most illustrious!
Oh! most inordinately fortunate!
Oh! most . . . . Oh! do for shame, do, bid me have done.

PEIS. What are you saying?

HER. All the people of Earth
Have joined in a complimentary vote, decreeing
A crown of gold to you, for your exertions.

PEIS. I'm much obliged to the people of Earth. But why?
What was their motive?

HER. O most noble founder
Of this supereminent celestial city,
You can't conceive the clamour of applause,
The enthusiastic popularity,
That attends upon your name; the impulse and stir,
That moves among mankind, to colonize
And migrate hither. In the time before,
There was a Spartan mania, and people went
Stalking about the streets, with Spartan staves,
With their long hair, unwashed and slovenly,
Like so many Socrates's: but, of late,
Birds are the fashion—Birds are all in all—
Their modes of life are grown to be mere copies
Of the birds' habits; rising with the lark,
Scratching and scrabbling suits and informations;
Picking and pecking upon points of law;
Brooding and hatching evidence. In short,
It has grown to such a pitch, that names of birds
Are given to individuals; Chærephon
Is called an owl, Theagenes, a goose,
Philocles, a cock sparrow, Midias,
A dunghill cock. And all the songs in vogue,
Have something about birds; swallows or doves;
Or about flying, or a wish for wings.

Such is the state of things, and I must warn you,
That you may expect to see some thousands of them
Arriving here, almost immediately,
With a clamorous demand for wings and claws:
I advise you to provide yourself in time.

PEIS. Come, it won't do then, to stand dawdling here;
Go you, fill the hampers and the baskets there
With wings, and bid the loutish porter bring them.
While I stop here, to encounter the new-comers.

It has been already observed in referance to the Chorus of the Acharnæ (p. 68), that when his Choruses have ceased to contribute to the progressive action of the drama, the poet has sometimes relieved himself, from the embarrassment which they created, by turning into ridicule the essential character and attributes of the Chorus itself.

In that comedy, as in the present, the hostility of the Chorus had given spirit and animation to some of the earlier scenes, but, from the moment when their hostility ceased, they had remained a mere superfluous appendage;—nothing being left for them to be done, and scarcely anything to be said; they could barely contrive to make their existence manifest from time to time by interposing with the expression of their acquiescence and approbation. The poet then having no further use for them, amuses his audience at their expense. The character of Choruses (except when they happen to be in a violent passion) being habitually obsequious and conformable—their obsequiousness is represented as connected with the display of Dicæopolis's good cheer, the sight of which confirms their favourable opinion of his political principles, and induces them to pass over his selfish treatment of the poor countryman with an apologetical observation.

But with respect to the Chorus now before us (that of the *Birds*), there is another point of the choral character (arising out of the very condition of their existence as a Chorus) which must not be overlooked. All Choruses are essentially poetic and imaginative, the votaries of ideal harmony and beauty. Under this point of view, the following passage places them in amusing contrast with the practical active bustling spirit of Peisthetairus. The Chorus begin chanting their namby-pamby anticipations of future splendour and happiness, Peisthetairus, in the first instance, favouring them with a sort of gruff acquiescence. But as they proceed he loses all patience, contriving however to relieve himself, and give a vent to his ill humour, by scolding the servant. The obsequious character of the Chorus now displays itself; they affect to sympathize with his impatience; expressing their own displeasure, in a style suited to their choral character, that is to say, pedantic and formal. Peisthetairus, utterly disgusted with them, evades their sympathy, by relapsing into comparative good-humour. The Chorus then betake

themselves to their usual practice of exhorting and advising. This is more than he can endure—instead of taking any notice of them, he flies into a pretended rage against his servant; and is running off the stage to beat him, when he is encountered by the first specimen of the new colonists.

This explanation must not be regarded as fanciful or superfluous. We should in that case be compelled to adopt a conclusion, in which the admirers of Aristophanes would not readily acquiesce, namely, that the poet had (in a play already of unusual length) inserted a passage of twenty-four lines destitute of poetical merit, without any comic intention and wholly unamusing as a dramatic exhibition.

Peisthetairus says little in the following scene, but is not the less amusing, from his restless fidget and ill-disguised impatience and disgust.

CHORUS.

Shortly shall the noble town,
Populous and gay,
Shine in honour and renown.

PEIS. [*drily*]. Why, perhaps she may.

CHOR. The benignant powers of love,
From their happy sphere,
From the blest abodes above . . . .

PEIS. [*venting his ill humour on the servant*].
Curse ye, rascal! can't ye move!

CHOR. . . . . Are descending here,
Where in all this earthly range,*
He that wishes for a change
Can he find a seat,
Joyous and secure as this,
Filled with happiness and bliss,
Such a fair retreat?
Here are all the lovely faces,
Gentle Venus and the Graces,
And the little Cupid;

* The Chorus in their idealizing and poetical character.

Order, ease and harmony,
Peace and affability.

PEIS. The scoundrel is so stupid,
Quicker, sirrah! bring it quicker!

CHOR. Let him bring the woven wicker
With the winged store.
I, myself, in very deed,
With the varlet will proceed,
And smite him more and more;
Like a sluggish ass he seems,
Or even, as a man that dreams,
Therefore smite him sore.

PEIS.† He's a lazy rogue, it's true.

CHOR.‡ Now range them forth, displayed in order due,
Feathers of every form and size and hue,
With shrewd intent, adapting every pinion,
To the new residents of your dominion.

PEIS. I vow by the hawks and eagles! I won't bear it;
I'll beat ye, I will myself, you lazy rascal!

As a practical comment upon the anticipations of the Chorus, and as a sample of the kind of population likely to resort to a new colony, the first arrival is that of a young reprobate, who wishes his father out of the way; and who conceives that the laws of the Birds will permit him to hasten that desirable conclusion. Peisthetairus receives and attends to him, without being betrayed into any expression of moral indignation, which would be inconsistent with his character, as a perfect politician. He merely states, as a matter of fact, some difficulties arising out of a point of law, professes a wish to serve him, as a hearty partisan, well disposed to the cause of the new colony; and finally, in an easy way, recalls to his recollection one of the precepts of his Catechism, and at the same

* Chorus in their obsequious character, but with a formal pedantic tone.

† Peisthetairus determined to cross them, relapses into good-humour.

‡ The Chorus assume their admonitory character; Peisthetairus can bear it no longer; he breaks from them, and runs off the stage, as if to beat the servant.

time points out to him a mode of life suited to his situation and tastes. The young man, who is more of a wild, desperate, than a confirmed villain, is struck with the suggestion, expresses a resolution to adopt it, and departs.

Enter a fellow, singing.

"Oh! for an eagle's force and might,*
Loftily to soar
Over land and sea, to light
On a lonely shore."

PEIS. Well, here's a song that's something to the purpose.

Y. MAN. Ay, ay, there's nothing like it—wings and flying!
Wings are your only sort. I'm a bird-fancier.
In the new fashion quite. I've taken a notion
To settle and live amongst ye. I like your laws.

PEIS.† What laws do you mean? We've many laws amongst us.

Y. MAN. Your laws in general; but particularly
The law that allows of beating one's own father.

PEIS. Why, truly, yes! we esteem it a point of valour,
In a chicken, if he clapperclaws the old cock.

Y. MAN. That was my view, feeling a wish in fact
To throttle mine, and seize the property.

PEIS.‡ Yes, but you'd find some difficulties here,
An obstacle insurmountable, I conceive;
An ancient statute standing unrepealed,
Engraved upon our old Ciconian columns.
It says, that when a stork or a ciconia
Has brought his lawful progeny of young storks
To bird's estate, and enabled them to fly:

---

* From a chorus of Sophocles; dramatic poetry and music was popular, like opera airs on the Continent. See "Knights," p. 126.

† Peisthetairus very gravely and methodically.

‡ Peisthetairus with great candour and composure simply stating a fact.

The sire shall stand entitled to a maintenance
At the son's cost and charge in his old age.

Y. Man.* I've managed finely it seems to mend myself!
Forced to maintain my father after all!

Peis.† No, no; not quite so bad; since you're come here,
As a well-wisher to the establishment,
Zealous and friendly, we'll contrive to equip you
With a suit of armour, as a soldier's orphan.‡
And now, young man, let me suggest some notions,
Things that were taught me when a boy. "Your father?"§
"Strike him not,"—rather take this pair of wings;
And this cockspur;‖ imagine, you've a coxcomb
Upon your head, to serve you for a helmet;
Look out for service, and enlist yourself;
Get into a garrison; live upon your pay;
And let your father live. You're fond of fighting,
And fond of flying—take a flight to Thrace;
There you may please yourself; and fight your fill.

Y. Man. By Jove, you're right. The notion's not a bad one.
I'll follow it up!

Peis. [*very gravely and quietly*].
You'll find it the best way. [*Exit.* Y. Man.

Cinesias, a lame dithyrambic poet and musician, arrives in the hopes of being able to provide himself with wings, which will enable him to look after his concerns among the clouds, the great emporium for

---

* Y. Man with a start of disappointment, slapping his forehead.

† Peisthetairus in a soothing consolatory tone.

‡ The sons of citizens slain were publicly presented with a suit of armour.

§ A want of harmony in the original verse appears to indicate the insertion of a formula—but, again, if we resolve this formula into its two component parts, the question and answer, with a consequent pause between them, the harmony of the verse is very sensibly improved. The formula was part of a series of moral prohibitions taught to children by question and answer.

‖ Giving him a sword.

business with all persons who are embarked in the dithyrambic line. Peisthetairus amuses himself with affronting and laughing at him, but he persists in his purpose, and professes his determination to continue worrying and persevering, till it is accomplished.

The reader who refers to the original will perceive that the interruptions, with which Peisthetairus breaks in upon Cinesias's recitation or song, are omitted in the translation. To the Athenian audience, the original must have been familiar, and probably sufficiently hackneyed, to make them feel amusement at hearing it accompanied with burlesque interruptions; but as only one other fragment of dithyrambic poetry has been preserved to modern times, and neither of them has appeared in our language, it seemed more advisable to present it to the English reader in an unbroken form.*

Enter CINESIAS, *singing.*

"Fearless, I direct my flight,
To the vast Olympian height;
Thence at random, I repair,
Wafted in the whirling air;
With an eddy, wild and strong,
Over all the fields of song."

PEIS. Ah! well, Cinesias, I'm quite glad to see ye;
But, what has brought ye and all your songs and music,
Hobbling along with your old chromatic joints?

CIN. [*singing*]. "Let me live, and let me sing,
Like a bird upon the wing."

PEIS. No more of that; but tell us plainly in prose,
What are ye come for? what's your scheme, your object?

CIN. I was anxious to procure a pair of wings,
To say the truth; wishing to make a tour
Among the clouds, collecting images
And metaphors, and things of that description.

PEIS. How so! do you procure 'em from the clouds?

CIN. Entirely! Our dithyrambic business absolutely
Depends upon them; our most approved commodities,

* It is singular that this other fragment presents the image of flying.

The dusty, misty, murky articles,
With the suitable wings and feathers, are imported
Exclusively from thence. I'll give you a sample,
A thing of my own composing. You shall judge.

PEIS. But, indeed, I'd rather not.

CIN. But, indeed, you must;
It's a summary view of flying, comprehending it
In all its parts, in every point of view.

CINESIAS, *singing*.

"Ye gentle feathered tribes,
Of every plume and hue,
That, in uninhabited air,
Are hurrying here and there;
Oh! that I, like you,
Could leave this earthly level,
For a wild aërial revel:
O'er the waste of ocean,
To wander, and to dally
With the billow's motion;
Or, in an eager sally,
Soaring to the sky,
To range and rove on high
With my plumy sails.
Buffeted and baffled, with the gusty gales,
Buffeted and baffled. . . . ."

[*While* CINESIAS *is repeating these last lines*, PEISTHETAIRUS *comes behind him, and gives him a flap with a huge pair of wings*.]

CIN. A pretty, civil joke indeed!

PEIS. What joke?
I'm only buffeting you with the plumy sails,
I thought it was what you wanted.

CIN. Well, that's fine!

Pretty respect for a master such as me,
A leader of the band, that all the tribes
Are ready to fight for, to bespeak him first.

PEIS. Well, we've a little unfledged chorus here,
That Leotrophides* hatched, poor puny nestlings,
I'll give 'em you for scholars.

CIN. Ah, laugh on!
Laugh on! but take may word for it, here I stay,
Till you provide me with a pair of wings,
Proper to circumnavigate the skies. [*Exit* CIN.

Peisthetairus is represented in the following scene, as a perfect master of his art; amusing himself in angling and playing with a stupid, impudent young scoundrel; sometimes twitching him in with a slight jerk of his hook, and again allowing him to run out to the full length of his line. If any one passage were to be selected from the remains of Aristophanes, as particularly illustrative of the manner in which he delights to exhibit character, perhaps it would be this; it is not a serious struggle for ascendency, such as he displays elsewhere; in this instance, he shows Peisthetairus as a consummate practitioner, relinquishing and reassuming it at pleasure. But this is one of those scenes which, to be thoroughly appreciated, would require to be developed in dramatic action by a superior comedian. The mere printed page, unless we suppose the reader to bestow as much attention on it as an actor would do in studying his part, will be found to convey a very confused and inadequate notion of it.

The song with which the Sycophant enters, is said by the Scholiast to be from Alcæus; it should seem more consonant to his character, to suppose it to be some modern parody or adaptation from one of the comedies of the time.

Enter SYCOPHANT, *singing*.

"Tell us who the strangers are,
Gentle swallow. Birds of air,
Party-coloured, poor and bare,

---

* Cinesias was ridiculed for his slight flimsy figure, adapted for flying; Leotrophides, the Scholiast tells us, resembled him in this respect.

Tell us who the strangers are.
Gentle swallow, tell me true."

PEIS. Here's a fine plague broke out. See yonder fellow
Sauntering along this way, swaggering and singing.

SYC. Ho! gentle swallow! I say, my gentle swallow
My gentle swallow! how often must I call? *

PEIS. Why, there it is; the prodigal in the fable
Seeking for swallows in a ragged coat.

SYC. [*in an arrogant overbearing tone*].
Who's he, that's set to serve out wings? Where is he?

PEIS. 'Tis I, but what do you want? You should explain.

SYC. Wings! Wings! You need not have asked me. Wings I want.

PEIS. Do you mean to fly for flannel to Pellene? †

SYC. [*a little disconcerted at this allusion to his attire*].
No, no! But I'm employed . . . . I employ myself,
In fact, among the allies and islanders;
I'm in the informing line.

PEIS. [*in a tone of very grave irony, which the* SYCOPHANT, *not perceiving, proceeds more fluently than before*].
I wish you joy.

SYC. And a mover and manager for prosecutions,
In criminal suits, and so forth, you understand me;
So I wish to equip myself with a pair of wings,
To whisk about, and trounce the islanders.

PEIS. Would it be doing things in better form,
To serve a summons flying, think ye?

SYC. [*not knowing very well what to make of him*]. No,
Not that, but just to avoid the risk of pirates,
To return in company with a flight of cranes,

---

* An expression of impatience in the original has been hitherto mistranslated.

† Pellene was famous for woollen stuff. Pieces of it were given as prizes at their public games

(As they do with the gravel in their gizzards),
With a bellyful of lawsuits for my ballast.

PEIS. [*in a grave, primitive, and somewhat twaddling tone, intended to reanimate the impertinence of the* SYCOPHANT].
So, this is your employment! A young man
Like you, to be an informer! Is it possible?

SYC. Why shouldn't it? I was never bred to labour.

PEIS. [*as before*]. But sure, there are other lawful occupations,
In which a brisk young fellow, such as you,
Might earn an honest, decent livelihood,
In credit and goodwill, without informing.

SYC. [*thoroughly taken in, and thinking he has to deal with a mere silly well-meaning old man, becomes emphatically insolent*].
Wings, my good fellow! wings I want—not words.

PEIS. [*drily*]. I'm giving you wings, already.

SYC. [*a little puzzled and taken aback*]. What, with words?
Is that your way?

PEIS. [*in a tone of very grave banter*].
Yes, for mankind in general
Are winged as it were, and brought to plume themselves
In different ways by speeches and discourse.

SYC. [*confused and puzzled*].
What, all?

PEIS. [*as before*]. Yes, all. I'll give you a striking instance:
You must have heard, yourself, elderly people
Sitting conversing in the barber's shop.
And one says—"Well, Diitrephes has talked
So much to my young man, he has brought him at last
To plume himself in driving." And another
Says, that his son is quite amongst the clouds,
Grown flighty of late, with studying tragedy.

SYC. [*with a sort of hesitating laugh*].
So, words are wings, you say.

PEIS. No doubt of it.
I say it, and I repeat it; human nature
Is marvellously raised and elevated
By words. I was in hopes, that I might raise you
By words of good advice, to another sphere;
To live in an honest calling.

SYC. [*feeling himself bantered and beaten, but restive and angry*].
But I won't though.

PEIS. [*coolly*]. Why, what will you do?

SYC. [*sulkily at first, but animating as he proceeds*].
Why, I won't disgrace my family,
My father and my grandfather before him
Served as informers; and I'll stick to it,
The profession. So, you'll please to hand 'em me out;
A pair of your best wings, vulture's or hawk's,
To fly to the Islands, with my summonses,
And home again, to record them in the courts,
And out again, to the Islands.

PEIS. [*in a tone of interest and sympathy, as if he was himself an amateur desirous of displaying his professional knowledge*].
Yes, that's well,
I understand ye, I think; your method is,
To be beforehand with 'em? Your defendant,
You get him cast for non-appearance, heh?
Before he can arrive; and finish him
In his absence, heh?

SYC. [*completely taken in, delighted—rubbing his hands*].
By Jove, you're up to it!

PEIS. Then, whilst he's sailing here you get the start,
And fly, to pounce upon the property,
To rummage out the chattels.

SYC. That's the trick,
The notion of it!—I see, you're up to it.

A man must whisk about, here and away,
Just like a whipping-top.

PEIS. Ay, yes, you're right,
I understand you—the instance is a good one.
A whipping-top, you say. Well, by good luck
I've here a capital slashing suit of wings,
To serve ye, made of a cow-hide from Corcyra.

SYC. O heaven! what's there? a horsewhip?

PEIS. Wings, I tell ye,
To whisk ye about, to flog ye, and make ye fly.

SYC. Oh dear! oh dear!

PEIS. Scamper away, you scoundrel!
Vanish, you vagabond! whisk yourself off!
I'll pay ye for your practices in the courts,
Your pettifoggico rascalities.

[*Exit* SYC.

[*to the attendants*]
Come bundle up the wings. Let's take 'em back.

[*Exeunt.*

Fabulous notions, respecting the unknown portions of the world, seem to have been nearly the same (or at least of the same character) in the time of Aristophanes as in the days of Sir John Mandeville.

The marvels of these regions, known only to the Birds, are naturally expatiated upon by a Chorus of Birds, when released from the business of the stage and placed in immediate communication with the audience. But it will be seen, that by a strange coincidence those wonderful and remote objects have an unaccountable analogy to things and persons at Athens; as in the following instance of the enormous tree, which by the botanists was considered as belonging to the sycophantic genus; but which was vulgarly called a Cleonymus, whereas at Athens there happened to be a person precisely of the same name, "Cleonymus," equally distinguished for his size; and having the same peculiarity of being classed among the Sycophants. And what is more singular, as the Athenian Cleonymus had lost his shield in battle, it so happened that his vegetable counterpart was a deciduous tree, with leaves of a scutiform or shield-like shape, which it was also in the habit of losing.

The antistrophe is a romantic and mysterious description of a junketing

public-house, which seems to have been in vogue; but from whi
it was not safe to return to town after dusk. Orestes, an her
name, was also the name or the nickname of a noted robber (s
"Acharnians," p. 77). It was reckoned extremely dangerous
meet a demigod after sunset.

CHORUS.—STROPHE.

We have flown, and we have run,
Viewing marvels, many a one;
In every land beneath the sun.
But, the strangest sight to see,
Was a huge exotic tree,
Growing, without heart or pith,
Weak and sappy, like a withe;
But, with leaves and boughs withal,
Comely, flourishing and tall.
This the learned all ascribe
To the sycophantic tribe;
But the natives there, like us,
Call it a Cleonymus.
In the spring's delightful hours,
It blossoms with rhetoric flowers;
I saw it standing in the field,
With leaves, in figure like a shield;
On the first tempestuous day,
I saw it cast those leaves away.

ANTISTROPHE.

There lies a region out of sight,
Far within the realm of night,
Far from torch and candle light.
There in feasts of meal and wine,
Men and demigods may join,
There they banquet, and they dine,
Whilst the light of day prevails;

At sunset, their assurance fails.
If any mortal then presumes,
Orestes, sallying from the tombs,
Like a fierce heroic sprite,
Assaults and strips the lonely wight.

The scene which follows may be considered as a short abstract of the mode in which clandestine political information is received, attended to, and dismissed. The informant presents himself with an extraordinary display of precaution and apprehension; he is received with eagerness and cordiality, attended to with great earnestness, interrupted only by some little ill-humour on the part of the man of business, when, in seeking for information, he is obliged to betray the want of it; finally, he is dismissed with a sort of indifference, approaching to derision, after having been thoroughly pumped and drained of his intelligence.

PROMETHEUS, PEISTHETAIRUS, CHORUS.

PRO. [*enters muffled up, peeping about him with a look of anxiety and suspicion*].
Oh dear! If Jupiter should chance to see me!
Where's Peisthetairus? Where?

PEIS. Why, what's all this?
This fellow muffled up?

PRO. Do look behind me;
Is anybody watching? any gods
Following and spying after me?

PEIS. No, none,
None that I can see, there's nobody. But you!
What are ye?

PRO. Tell me, what's the time of day?

PEIS. Why, noon, past noon; but tell me, who are ye?
Speak.

PRO. Much past,—how much?

PEIS. [*aside*]. Confound the fool, I say
The insufferable blockhead!

PRO. How's the sky?
Open or overcast? Are there any clouds?
PEIS. [*aloud and angrily*].
Be hanged!
PRO. Then I'll disguise myself no longer.
PEIS. My dear Prometheus!
PRO. Hold your tongue, I beg;
Don't mention my name! If Jupiter should see me,
Or overhear ye, I'm ruined and undone.
But now, to give you a full complete account
Of everything that's passing, there in heaven—
The present state of things. . . . . But first I'll trouble you
To take the umbrella, and hold it overhead,
Lest they should overlook us.
PEIS. What a thought!
Just like yourself! A true Promethean thought!
Stand under it, here! Speak boldly; never fear.
PRO. D'ye mind me?
PEIS. Yes, I mind ye. Speak away.
PRO. [*emphatically*]. Jupiter's ruined.
PEIS. Ruined! How? Since when?
PRO. From the first hour you fortified and planted
Your atmospheric settlements. Ever since,
There's not a mortal offers anything
In the shape of sacrifice. No smoke of victims!
No fumes of incense! Absolutely nothing!
We're keeping a strict fast—fasting perforce,
From day to day—the whole community.
And the inland barbarous gods in the upper country
Are broken out, quite mutinous and savage,
With hunger and anger; threatening to come down
With all their force; if Jupiter refuses
To open the ports, and allow them a free traffic
For their entrails and intestines, as before.

PEIS. [*a little annoyed at being obliged to ask the question*].
What—are there other barbarous gods, besides,
In the upper country?

PRO. Barbarous?—to be sure!
They're all of Execestides's kindred.*

PEIS. [*as before hesitating, but with a sort of affected ease*].
Well—but—the name now. The same barbarous deities—
What name do you call 'em?

PRO. [*surprised at* PEISTHETAIRUS'S *ignorance*].
Call them! The Triballi!

PEIS. [*giving vent to his irritation by a forced joke*].
Ah! well then, that accounts for our old saying:—
Confound the *Tribe* of them!

PRO. [*annoyed and drily*]. Precisely so.
But, now to business. Thus much, I can tell ye;
That envoys will arrive immediately
From Jupiter, and those upland wild Triballi,
To treat for a peace. But, you must not consent
To ratify or conclude, till Jupiter
Acknowledges the sovereignty of the birds;
Surrendering up to you, the sovereign queen,
Whom you must marry.

PEIS. Why, what queen is that?

PRO. What queen? A most delightful charming girl,
Jove's housekeeper, that manages his matters,
Serves out his thunderbolts, arranges everything;
The constitutional laws and liberties,
Morals and manners, the marine department,
Freedom of speech, and threepence for the juries.

PEIS. Why, that seems all in all.

PRO. Yes, everything,
I tell ye, in having her, you've everything:

---

* Noted elsewhere in this play as having no just claim to the rights of a citizen.

I came down hastily, to say thus much;
I'm hearty, ye know; I stick to principle.
Steady to the human interest—always was.*

PEIS. Yes! we're obliged to you for our roast victuals.

PRO. And I hate these present gods, you know, most thoroughly.
I need not tell you that.

PEIS.† [*with a sort of half sneer*]. No, no, you need not,
You're known of old, for an enemy to the gods.

PRO. Yes, yes, like Timon, I'm a perfect Timon;
Just such another. But I must be going;
Give me the umbrella; if Jupiter should see me,
He'll think that I'm attending a procession.‡

PEIS. That's well, but don't forget the folding chair,
For a part of your disguise. Here, take it with you.

[*Exeunt.*

Under the same form of a description of the wonders of the Terra Incognita, we have here again one of those pieces of personal satire peculiar to the ancient comedy. It is directed against Socrates and his school, including by name his friend Chærephon.

The uncleanly habits imputed to them ("where baths and washing are forbidden") will have been seen already alluded to in p. 249, ("unwashed and slovenly like so many Socrates's")—but it is difficult to conceive what is the imputation conveyed, or alluded to, by describing them as engaged in the evocation of spirits.

It is a question, which might form a curious subject of inquiry for those who have the means of prosecuting it, and who are better acquainted with the history of the Socratic school.

Pisander seems to have been an object of the poet's peculiar aversion; in his first political comedy, "The Babylonians," he had been

* Prometheus had incurred the wrath of Jupiter by his kindness to mankind in having bestowed on them the gift of fire.

† Peisthetairus, who has learned all that he wanted to know, does not care to lose his time in listening to professions of zeal and attachment. He contrives, however, to conclude civilly with a piece of obliging attention.

‡ The Canœphoroi were followed by a person bearing an umbrella and a folding chair.

mentioned in company with two * others, as having given occasion to the origin of the war, by their extortion of compulsory presents from the subject States, an accusation which is repeated in "The Lysistrata," v. 490; again in "The Peace," v. 396, his military pomp and arrogance are mentioned as objects of extreme disgust and contempt, and it seems that he must have been the commander described at length in the Epirrema of the same comedy, most splendidly caparisoned and foremost in running away. He had also been stigmatized by Eupolis as having been guilty of cowardly conduct.

It seems that he is brought in here, by-the-by, not as a follower or disciple of Socrates, but in allusion to his want of military courage, as a person whose *spirit wanted to be raised*, and who therefore naturally resorted to a place where *spirits were raised*.

Chærephon was the most zealous admirer of Socrates; he is recorded to have been a person of most singular aspect.

CHORUS.

Beyond the navigable seas,
Amongst the fierce Antipodes,
There lies a lake, obscure and holy,
Lazy, deep, melancholy,
Solitary, secret, hidden,
Where baths and washing are forbidden.
Socrates, beside the brink,
Summons from the murky sink
Many a disembodied ghost;
And Pisander reached the coast,
To raise the spirit, that he lost;
With a victim, strange and new,
A gawky camel,† which he slew

---

* "Two;" for by putting the participle in the dual, and transposing the verb and the proper name, the true metre of the fragment (the long anapæst) may be restored.

† A simile by juxtaposition indirectly expressed as when Adam is described *tall and fair beneath* a palm-tree and the gigantic warriors in Homer standing before the *lofty* gates. The indirect simile may be either beautiful or sublime, or, as in the present instance, ludicrous.

Like Ulysses—whereupon,
The grizzly sprite of Chærephon
Flitted round him; and appeared
With his eyebrows and his beard,
Like a strange infernal fowl,
Half a vampire, half an owl.

It is usual with Aristophanes to omit that explanation which a poet of the new comedy would have put into a soliloquy, or into a confidential conversation between the master and his slave. He gives his audience credit for being able to comprehend at once the previous views of the person whom he introduces.

Neptune, the chief of the Embassy, in which Hercules and the barbarous Triballian deity are joined with him, has settled in his own mind a very satisfactory plan for the management of it. "Hercules is my nephew, and of course looks up to me. He will be easily managed, if I can appear to consult and advise exclusively with him. But I must begin by putting the Triballian wholly out of the question, as a ragamuffin whom we are both equally ashamed of. Otherwise, their understandings are so much upon a par, my poor nephew, I am sorry to say, is such a blockhead, that he and that beast, the Triballian, from the mere natural sympathy of their stupidity, will join and act together in spite of me." He accordingly begins with the Triballian, by settling his dress for him, and as soon as he has disposed of him, and set him down, as an unproduceable ruffian, he turns round to consult Hercules, who makes a stupid answer. Neptune, like a kind uncle, endeavours quietly and calmly to set him right. Up to this point everything appears promising; but Neptune, alas! is deficient in presence of mind, he is encumbered with his dignity; and above all, in the person of Peisthetairus, he is opposed to a politician, infinitely his superior in resources and address. They advance within sight of Peisthetairus, who affects not to notice them, and remains looking down among the dishes, apparently occupied with his sauces. Neptune, of course, advances no farther, but remains with a decided attitude and look of dignity, ready to meet his eye, as soon as it shall be raised to encounter his. Unfortunately, however, he is so much occupied with his own attitude, and with the look which seems to say—"well, sir, now you're at leisure,"—that he omits to restrain Hercules, who, more impatient and indignant, presses forward with an announcement of their arrival, calculated, as he thinks, to rouse and astonish Peisthetairus; failing in his attempt to make an impression, and feeling

himself at a loss, he remains exposed to the influence of his natural instincts, which attract him towards the pans and dishes. Hence, a conversation is begun, a recognition takes place, the ice is broken, and the negotiation opened ; while Neptune is left with his dignity in the background.

NEPTUNE, *the* TRIBALLIAN ENVOY, HERCULES.

NEP. There's Nephelococcugia, that's the town,
The point we're bound to, with our embassy.
[*turning to the* TRIBALLIAN]
But you! What a figure have ye made yourself!
What a way to wear a mantle! slouching off
From the left shoulder! hitch it round, I tell ye,
On the right side. For shame—come—so; that's better,
These folds, too, bundled up. There, throw them round
Even and easy—so. Why, you're a savage,
A natural born savage. Oh! democracy!
What will it bring us to? When such a ruffian
Is voted into an embassy!

TRI. [*to* NEPTUNE, *who is pulling his dress about.*]
Come, hands off!
Hands off!

NEP. Keep quiet, I tell ye, and hold your tongue,
For a very beast: in all my life in heaven,
I never saw such another—Hercules,
I say, what shall we do? What should you think?

HER. What would I do? What do I think? I've told you
Already . . . . I think to throttle him—the fellow,
Whoever he is, that's keeping us blockaded.

NEP. Yes, my good friend; but we were sent, you know,
To treat for a peace. Our embassy is for peace.

HER. That makes no difference; or if it does,
It makes me long to throttle him the more.

PEIS. [*very busy, affecting not to see them*].
Give me the Silphium spice. Where's the cheese-grater?
Bring cheese here, somebody! Mend the charcoal fire.
HER. Mortal, we greet you and hail you! Three of us—
Three deities.
PEIS. [*without looking up*]. But I'm engaged at present;
A little busy, you see, mixing my sauce.
HER. Why sure! How can it be? what dish is this?
Birds seemingly!
PEIS. [*without looking up*]. Some individual birds,
Opposed to the popular democratic birds,
Rendered themselves obnoxious.
HER. So, you've plucked them,
And put them into sauce, provisionally?
PEIS. [*looking up*]. Oh! bless me, Hercules, I'm quite glad to see you.
What brings you here?
HER. We're come upon an embassy
From heaven, to put an end to this same war . . . .
SERV. [*to* PEISTHETAIRUS].
The cruet's empty, our oil is out.
PEIS. No matter,
Fetch more, fetch plenty, I tell ye. We shall want it.
HER. For, in fact it brings no benefit to us,
The continuance of the war prolonging it;
And you yourselves, by being on good terms
Of harmony with the gods . . . . why, for the future,
You'd never need to know, the want of rain,
For water in your tanks; and we could serve ye
With reasonable, seasonable weather,
According as you wished it, wet or dry.
And this is our commission coming here,
As envoys, with authority to treat.

PEIS. Well, the dispute, you know, from the beginning,
Did not originate with us. The war
(If we could hope in any way to bring you
To reasonable terms) might be concluded.
Our wishes, I declare it, are for peace.
If the same wish prevails upon your part,
The arrangement in itself, is obvious.
A retrocession on the part of Jupiter.
The birds, again to be reintegrated
In their estate of sovereignty. This seems
The fair result; and if we can conclude,
I shall hope to see the ambassadors to supper.

HER. Well, this seems satisfactory; I consent.

NEP. [*to* HERCULES]. What's come to ye? What do ye mean? Are ye gone mad?
You glutton; would you ruin your own father,
Depriving him of his ancient sovereignty?

PEIS.* [*to* NEPTUNE]. Indeed! And would not it be a better method
For all you deities, and confirm your power,
To leave the birds to manage things below?
You sit there, muffled in your clouds above,
While all mankind are shifting, skulking, lurking,
And perjuring themselves here out of sight.
Whereas, if you would form a steady strict
Alliance with the Birds, when any man
(Using the common old familiar oath—
"By Jupiter and the crow") † forswore himself,
The crow would pick his eyes out, for his pains.

NEP. Well, that seems plausible—that's fairly put.

HER. I think so, too.

---

* Peisthetairus with the civil, good-humoured sneer of a superior understanding.

† See p. 204 and note.

PEIS. [*to the* TRIBALLIAN]. Well, what say you?

TRIB. Say true.*

PEIS.† Yes. He consents, you see! But I'll explain now
The services and good offices we could do you.
Suppose a mortal made a vow, for instance,
To any of you; then he delays and shuffles,
And says "the gods are easy creditors."
In such a case, we could assist ye, I say,
To levy a fine.

NEP. [*open to conviction, but anxious to proceed on sure ground*].
How would you do it? Tell me.

PEIS. Why, for example, when he's counting money,
Or sitting in the bath, we give the warrant
To a pursuivant of ours, a kite or magpie;
And they pounce down immediately, and distrain
Cash or apparel, money or money's worth,
To twice the amount of your demand upon him.

HER. Well, I'm for giving up the sovereignty,
For my part.

NEP. [*convinced, but wishing to avoid responsibility, by voting last*].
The Triballian, what says he?

HER. [*aside to the* TRIBALLIAN, *showing his fist*].
You, sir; do you want to be well banged or not?
Mind, how you vote! Take care how you provoke me.

TRIB. Yaw, yaw. Goot, goot.

HER. He's of the same opinion.

NEP. Then, since you're both agreed, I must agree.

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* It is singular that these two syllables are the last syllables of the word (or sentence), in his own language, by which the Triballian expresses his consent.

† Peisthetairus very volubly—quite at his ease.

HER. [*shouting to* PEISTHETAIRUS, *the negotiators having withdrawn to consult at the extremity of the stage*].
Well, you! we've settled this concern, you see,
About the sovereignty; we're all agreed.

PEIS. Oh faith, there's one thing more, I recollect,
Before we part; a point that I must mention.
As for dame Juno, we'll not speak of her;
I've no pretensions, Jupiter may keep her;
But, for that other queen, his manager,
The sovereign goddess, her surrender to me
Is quite an article indispensable.

NEP.* Your views, I find, are not disposed for peace:
We must turn homewards.

PEIS. As you please, so be it.
Cook, mind what you're about there with the sauce;
Let's have it rich and savoury, thicken it up!

HER. How now, man? Neptune! are you flying off?
Must we remain at war, here, for a woman?

NEP. But, what are we to do?

HER. Do? Why, make peace.

NEP.† I pity you really! I feel quite ashamed
And sorry to see you; ruining yourself!
If anything should happen to your father,
After surrendering the sovereignty,
What's to become of you? When you yourself
Have voted away your whole inheritance:
At his decease, you must remain a beggar.

PEIS. [*aside to* HERCULES]. Ah there! I thought so; he's coming over ye;
Step here a moment! Let me speak to ye!
Your uncle's chousing you, my poor dear friend,

---

* Neptune with gravity and dignity.

† Neptune in great wrath, like a grave uncle scolding a great fool of a nephew.

You've not a farthing's worth of expectation,
From what your father leaves. Ye can't inherit
By law: ye're illegitimate, ye know.

HER. Heigh-day! Why, what do you mean?

PEIS. I mean the fact!
Your mother was a foreigner; Minerva
Is counted an heiress, everybody knows;
How could that be, supposing her own father
To have had a lawful heir?

HER. But, if my father
Should choose to leave the property to me,
In his last will.

PEIS. The law would cancel it!
And Neptune, he that's using all his influence
To work upon ye, he'd be the very first
To oppose ye, and oust ye, as the testator's brother.
I'll tell ye what the law says, Solon's law:

"A foreign heir shall not succeed,*
Where there are children of the lawful breed:
But, if no native heir there be,
The kinsman nearest in degree
Shall enter on the property."

HER. Does nothing come to me, then? Nothing at all,
Of all my father leaves?

PEIS. Nothing at all,
I should conceive. But you perhaps can tell me.
Did he, your father, ever take ye with him,
To get ye enrolled upon the register?

HER. No, truly I . . . . thought it strange, . . . he . . . never did.

---

* Memory must have been in the earliest times the sole repository of knowledge of every kind. Every means therefore of assistance to the memory was most carefully cultivated. Amongst other instances, in order to facilitate the requisite knowledge and recollection of them, the Laws themselves were composed and recorded in a metrical form. Hence the same word in Greek signifies both a *Song* and a *Law*.

PEIS. Well, but don't think things strange. Don't stand there, stammering,
Puzzling and gaping. Trust yourself to me,
'Tis I must make your fortune after all!
If you'll reside and settle amongst us here,
I'll make you chief commander among the birds,
Captain, and Autocrat and everything.
Here you shall domineer and rule the roast,
With splendour and opulence and pigeon's milk.

HER. [*in a more audible voice, and in a formal decided tone**].
I agreed with you before: I think your argument
Unanswerable. I shall vote for the surrender.

PEIS. [*to* NEPTUNE]. And what say you?

NEP. [*firmly and vehemently*]. Decidedly I dissent.

PEIS. Then it depends upon our other friend,
It rests with the Triballian, what say you?

TRI. Me tell you; pretty girl, grand beautiful queen,
Give him to birds.

HER. Aye, give her up, you mean.

NEP. Mean! He knows nothing about it. He means nothing
But chattering like a magpie.

PEIS.† Well "the magpies."
He means, the magpies or the birds in general.
The republic of the birds—their government—
That the surrender should be made to them.

NEP. [*in great wrath*]. Well, settle it yourselves; amongst yourselves;
In your own style: I've nothing more to say.

---

* They had withdrawn apart, and their previous conversation was supposed not to have been audible to Neptune and the Triballian, whose by-play might have consisted in Neptune's formal attempts to soothe and gain the Triballian, who would only shrug up his shoulders.

† Peisthetairus being sure of his point, amuses himself with arguing nonsensically to provoke Neptune.

HER. [*to* PEISTHETAIRUS].
Come, we're agreed in fact, to grant your terms;
But you must come, to accompany us to the sky;
To take back this same queen, and the other matters.

PEIS. [*very quietly*]. It happens lucky enough, with this provision
For a marriage feast. It seems prepared on purpose.

HER. Indeed, and it does. Suppose in the meanwhile,
I superintend the cookery, and turn the roast,
While you go back together.

NEP. [*with a start of surprise and disgust*]. Turn the roast!
A pretty employment! Won't you go with us?

HER. No, thank ye; I'm mighty comfortable here.

PEIS. Come, give me a marriage robe; I must be going.

We have here another satyric song, of the same fanciful humour as the preceding, descriptive of imaginary wonders in an unknown world. In the last instance, the poet had exhibited a caricature of the Socratic school of philosophy. The same vein of ridicule is now directed against another novelty, tending equally, in the opinion of the poet (more just in this than in the preceding instance) to produce an undesirable change in the general character of the nation.

Mercenary professors and teachers of rhetoric, for the most part foreigners (the Gorgias for instance here mentioned was a Sicilian), had of late been received and encouraged in Athens. Their public exhibitions, which were generally resorted to, had operated as an incentive to the natural propensity of the Athenian people, already more than enough disposed to divert their attention to the unproductive pursuits of litigation and speechifying. While at the same time their private lessons (the course of instruction by which they engaged to communicate the secrets of their art, and to form young practitioners) were purchased in some instances at an enormous price, by young men of wealth aspiring to political eminence and celebrity.

CHORUS.

Along the Sycophantic shore,
And where the savage tribes adore

The waters of the Clepsydra,*
There dwells a nation, stern and strong,
Armed with an enormous tongue,
Wherewith they smite and slay: †

With their tongues, they reap and sow,
And gather all the fruits ‡ that grow,
The vintage and the grain;
Gorgias is their chief of pride,
And many more there be beside
Of mickle might and main.

Good they never teach, nor show
But how to work men harm and woe,
Unrighteousness and wrong;
And hence the custom doth arise,
When beasts are slain in sacrifice,
We sever out the tongue. §

It has been already observed, that this play, in the success of which, as a sedative to the popular insanity, the higher orders of the community were essentially interested, was exhibited with a singular recklessness of expense.

The concluding scene seems to have been equal in magnificence to those of the most gorgeous tragedies; and it is remarkable that in the passage immediately following, contrary to the invariable custom of the poet, there is no tinge of burlesque. The poet has throughout, *as a poet*, imitated the style of Sophocles; while under his direction, *as the manager of a comic drama*, the actor who personated Peisthetairus, must have been instructed to reduce the scene to the level of comedy, by his airs and gestures characteristic of unaccustomed dignity and authority. It must have been a very delicate and amusing

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* The Clepsydra, or water-clock, marked the time allotted to each advocate. It was a prominent object in the Courts of Justice. The name also belonged to certain streams and springs.

† Dangerous as accusers.

‡ Their salaries and profits.

§ This sacrificial form was peculiar to the Athenians.

piece of acting. An elderly man, a sharp, thorough-going fellow—to see him

Assume the god,
Affect to nod,
And seem to shake the spheres!

The choral songs which follow are of a peculiar and by no means obvious character, which it is rather difficult to define, and not very easy to express in imitation. In the comedy of "The Peace" we have a rustic Epithalamium, perfectly rustic, and probably not very different from the rustic extempore poetry of the same race at the present day. But in this instance we have a town Epithalamium, such as we may suppose to have been composed and perpetrated in honour of the nuptials of the more noble and wealthy families in Athens. The vulgar town poet is anxious to exhibit his *education* by imitating and borrowing passages from the most approved lyrical poets, but at the same time reduces all their imagery and expressions to the natural level of his own dulness. Thus maintaining, in the verse itself, that balance of the ludicrous and sublime, which in the first part of the scene had resulted from the contrast of the poetry and the action.

Some parts of the Epithalamium of Catullus (see v. 100 and the following stanzas) are evidently a humorous imitation of the vulgar Epithalamia at Rome. Under cover of this character, he amused himself at the expense of his new married friends.

HARBINGER *or* HERALD, *announcing the approach of* PEISTHETAIRUS.

O fortunate! O triumphant! O beyond
All power of speech or thought, supremely blest,
Prosperous happy birds! Behold your king,
Here in his glorious palace! Mark his entrance,
Dazzling all eyes, resplendent as a star;
Outshining all the golden lights, that beam
From the rich roof, even as a summer sun,
Or brighter than the sun, blazing at noon.
He comes; and at his side a female form
Of beauty ineffable; wielding on high,
In his right hand, the winged thunderbolt,
Jove's weapon. While the fumes of incense spread

Circling around, and subtle odours steal
Upon the senses from the wreathed smoke,
Curling and rising in the tranquil air.
See, there he stands! Now must the sacred Muse
Give with auspicious words her welcome due.

SEMICHORUS.

Stand aside and clear the ground,
Spreading in a circle round
With a worthy welcoming;
To salute our noble king
In his splendour and his pride,
Coming hither, side by side,
With his happy lovely bride.

O the fair delightful face!
What a figure! What a grace!
What a presence! What a carriage!
What a noble worthy marriage.

Let the birds rejoice and sing,
At the wedding of the king:
Happy to congratulate
Such a blessing to the State.
Hymen, Hymen, Ho!

Jupiter, that god sublime,
When the Fates, in former time,
Matched him with the Queen of Heaven,
At a solemn banquet given,
Such a feast was held above;
And the charming God of Love,
Being present in command,
As a Bridesman took his stand,
With the golden reins in hand.
Hymen, Hymen, Ho!

PEIS.* I accept and approve the marks of your love,
Your music and verse I applaud and admire.
But rouse your invention, and raising it higher,
Describe me the terrible engine of Jove,
The thunder of earth and the thunder above.

The reader may have already observed, that in more than one instance the poet directs the attention of his audience to the lavish expenditure of the Choregus. This seems to have been the object of the following lines, introductory to a new display of theatrical thunder manufactured upon an improved principle.

CHORUS.

O dreaded bolt of heaven,
The clouds with horror cleaving,
And ye terrestrial thunders deep and low
Closed in the subterranean caves † below,
That even at this instant growl and rage,
Shaking with awful sound this earthly stage;
Our king by you has gained his due;
By your assistance, yours alone,
Everything is made his own,
Jove's dominion and his throne;
And his happiness and pride,
His delightful lovely bride.
Hymen, Hymen, Ho!

PEISTHETAIRUS.

Birds of ocean and of air,
Hither in a troop repair,

* Peisthetairus puts an end to their nonsense with condescension and affability.

† Caves of the theatre.

To the royal ceremony,
Our triumphant matrimony!
  Come for us to feast and feed ye!
    Come to revel, dance, and sing!—
  Lovely creature! Let me lead ye
    Hand in hand, and wing to wing.

SOPHOCLES

ŒDIPUS TYRANNUS AND ŒDIPUS COLONEUS

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY

THOMAS FRANCKLIN

ŒDIPUS TYRANNUS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ŒDIPUS, *King of Thebes.*
JOCASTA, *Wife of Œdipus.*
CREON, *Brother to Jocasta.*
TIRESIAS, *a Blind Prophet of Thebes.*
A SHEPHERD, *from Corinth.*
A MESSENGER.
AN OLD SHEPHERD, *formerly belonging to Laius.*
HIGH PRIEST OF JUPITER.
CHORUS, *composed of the Priests and Ancient Men of Thebes, Theban Youths, Children of Œdipus, Attendants, &c.*

SCENE.—THEBES, *before the Palace of* ŒDIPUS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

ŒDIPUS, HIGH PRIEST OF JUPITER.

ŒDIPUS. O my loved sons! the youthful progeny
Of ancient Cadmus, wherefore sit you here
And suppliant thus, with sacred boughs adorned,
Crowd to our altars? Frequent sacrifice
And prayers and sighs and sorrows fill the land.
I could have sent to learn the fatal cause;
But see, your anxious sovereign comes himself
To know it all from you; behold your king,
Renowned Œdipus; do thou, old man,

For best that office suits thy years, inform me,
Why you are come; is it the present ill
That calls you here, or dread of future woe?
Hard were indeed the heart that did not feel
For grief like yours, and pity such distress:
If there be aught that Œdipus can do
To serve his people, know me for your friend.

PRIEST. O king! thou seest what numbers throng thy altars;
Here, bending sad beneath the weight of years,
The hoary priests, here crowd the chosen youth
Of Thebes, with these a weak and suppliant train
Of helpless infants, last in me behold
The minister of Jove: far off thou seest
Assembled multitudes, with laurel crowned,
To where Minerva's hallowed temples rise
Frequent repair, or where Ismenus laves
Apollo's sacred shrine: too well thou knowst
Thy wretched Thebes, with dreadful storms oppressed,
Scarce lifts her head above the whelming flood;
The teeming earth her blasted harvest mourns,
And on the barren plain the flocks and herds
Unnumbered perish; dire abortion thwarts
The mother's hopes, and painful she brings forth
The half-formed infant; baleful pestilence
Hath laid our city waste, the fiery god
Stalks o'er deserted Thebes; whilst with our groans
Enriched, the gloomy god of Erebus
Triumphant smiles. O Œdipus! to thee
We bend; behold these youths, with me they kneel,
And suppliant at thy altars sue for aid,
To thee the first of men, and only less
Than them whose favour thou alone canst gain,
The gods above; thy wisdom yet may heal
The deep-felt wounds, and make the powers divine
Propitious to us. Thebes long since to thee
Her safety owed, when from the Sphynx delivered
Thy grateful people saw thee, not by man
But by the gods instructed, save the land:
Now then, thou best of kings, assist us now.
Oh! by some mortal or immortal aid

Now succour the distress! On wisdom oft,
And prudent counsels in the hour of ill,
Success awaits. O dearest prince! support,
Relieve thy Thebes; on thee, its saviour once,
Again its calls. Now, if thou wouldst not see
The mem'ry perish of thy former deeds,
Let it not call in vain, but rise, and save!
With happiest omens once and fair success
We saw thee crowned: oh! be thyself again,
And may thy will and fortune be the same!
If thou art yet to reign, O king! remember
A sovereign's riches is a peopled realm;
For what will ships or lofty towers avail
Unarmed with men to guard and to defend them?

ŒDI. O my unhappy sons! too well I know
Your sad estate. I know the woes of Thebes;
And yet amongst you lives not such a wretch
As Œdipus; for oh! on me, my children,
Your sorrows press. Alas! I feel for you
My people, for myself, for Thebes, for all!
Think not I slept regardless of your ills;
Oh no! with many a tear I wept your fate,
And oft in meditation deep revolved
How best your peace and safety to restore:
The only medicine that my thoughts could find
I have administered: Menæceus' son,
The noble Creon, went by my command
To Delphos from Apollo's shrine, to know
What must be done to save this wretched land:
'Tis time he were returned: I wonder much
At his delay. If, when he comes, your king
Perform not all the god enjoins, then say
He is the worst of men.

PRIEST. O king! thy words
Are gracious, and if right these youths inform
me,
Creon is here.

ŒDI. O Phœbus! grant he come
With tidings cheerful as the smile he wears!

PRIEST. He is the messenger of good; for see,
His brows are crowned with laurel.

ŒDI. We shall soon
Be satisfied: he comes.

SCENE II.

CREON, ŒDIPUS, PRIEST, CHORUS.

ŒDI. My dearest Creon;
Oh! say, what answer bearst thou from the god:
Or good, or ill?
CREON. Good, very good; for know,
The worst of ills, if rightly used, may prove
The means of happiness.
ŒDI. What says my friend?
This answer gives me nought to hope or fear.
CREON. Shall we retire, or would you that I speak
In public here?
ŒDI. Before them all declare it;
Their woes sit heavier on me than my own.
CREON. Then mark what I have heard: the god commands
That instant we drive forth the fatal cause
Of this dire pestilence, nor nourish here
The accursed monster.
ŒDI. Who? What monster? How
Remove it?
CREON. Or by banishment, or death.
Life must be given for life; for yet his blood
Rests on the city.
ŒDI. Whose? What means the god?
CREON. O king! before thee Laius ruled o'er Thebes.
ŒDI. I know he did, though I did ne'er behold him.
CREON. Laius was slain, and on his murderers,
So Phœbus says, we must have vengeance.
ŒDI. Where,
Where are the murderers? Who shall trace the guilt
Buried so long in silence?
CREON. Here, he said,
E'en in this land, what's sought for may be found,
But truth unsearched for seldom comes to light.

ŒDI. How did he fall, and where?—at home, abroad?
Died he at Thebes, or in a foreign land?
CREON. He left his palace, fame reports, to seek
Some oracle; since that, we ne'er beheld him.
ŒDI. But did no messenger return? Not one
Of all his train, of whom we might inquire
Touching this murder?
CREON. One, and one alone,
Came back, who, flying, 'scaped the general slaughter.
But nothing save one little circumstance
Or knew, or e'er related.
ŒDI. What was that?
Much may be learned from that. A little dawn
Of light appearing may discover all.
CREON. Laius, attacked by robbers, and oppressed
By numbers, fell. Such is his tale.
ŒDI. Would they—
Would robbers do so desperate a deed,
Unbribed and unassisted?
CREON. So, indeed,
Suspicion whispered then. But—Laius dead—
No friend was found to vindicate the wrong.
ŒDI. But what strange cause could stop inquiry thus
Into the murder of a king?
CREON. The Sphynx.
Her dire enigma kept our thoughts intent
On present ills, nor gave us time to search
The past mysterious deed.
ŒDI. Myself will try
Soon to unveil it. Thou, Apollo, well,
And well hast thou, my Creon, lent thy aid.
Your Œdipus shall now perform his part.
Yes, I will fight for Phœbus and my country.
And so I ought. For not to friends alone,
Or kindred, owe I this, but to myself.
Who murdered him, perchance would murder me!
His cause is mine. Wherefore, my children, rise;
Take hence your suppliant boughs, and summon here
The race of Cadmus—my assembled people.

Nought shall be left untried. Apollo leads,
And we shall rise to joy, or sink for ever.

Priest. Haste, then, my sons, for this we hither came:
About it quick, and may the god who sent
This oracle, protect, defend, and save us! [*Exeunt.*

Chorus.

Strophe 1.

O thou great oracle divine!
Who didst to happy Thebes remove
From Delphi's golden shrine,
And in sweet sounds declare the will of Jove.
Daughter of hope, oh! soothe my soul to rest,
And calm the rising tumult in my breast.
Look down, O Phœbus! on thy loved abode.
Speak, for thou knowst the dark decrees of fate,
Our present and our future state.
O Delian! be thou still our healing god!

Antistrophe 1.

Minerva, first on thee I call,
Daughter of Jove, immortal maid,
Low beneath thy feet we fall:
Oh! bring thy sister Dian to our aid.
Goddess of Thebes, from thy imperial throne
Look with an eye of gentle pity down;
And thou, far-shooting Phœbus, once the friend
Of this unhappy, this devoted land,
Oh! now, if ever, let thy hand
Once more be stretched to save and to defend!

Strophe 2.

Great Thebes, my sons, is now no more;
She falls and ne'er again shall rise,
Nought can her health or strength restore,
The mighty nation sinks, she droops, she dies.

Stripped of her fruits, behold the barren earth—
The half-formed infant struggles for a birth.
The mother sinks unequal to her pain:
Whilst quick as birds in airy circles fly,
Or lightnings from an angry sky,
Crowds press on crowds to Pluto's dark domain.

Antistrophe 2.

Behold what heaps of wretches slain,
Unburied, unlamented lie,
Nor parents now nor friends remain
To grace their deaths with pious obsequy.
The aged matron and the blooming wife,
Cling to the altars—sue for added life.
With sighs and groans united Pæans rise;
Re-echoed, still doth great Apollo's name
Their sorrows and their wants proclaim.
Frequent to him ascends the sacrifice.

Strophe 3.

Haste then, Minerva, beauteous maid,
Descend in this afflictive hour,
Haste to thy dying people's aid,
Drive hence this baneful, this destructive power!
Who comes not armed with hostile sword or shield,
Yet strews with many a corse th' ensanguined field;
To Amphitrite's wide extending bed
Oh! drive him, goddess, from thy favourite land,
Or let him, by thy dread command,
Bury in Thracian waves his ignominious head.

Antistrophe 3.

Father of all, immortal Jove!
Oh! now thy fiery terrors send;
From thy dreadful stores above
Let lightnings blast him and let thunders rend
And thou, O Lydian king! thy aid impart;
Send from thy golden bow, th' unerring dart;

Smile, chaste Diana, on this loved abode,
  Whilst Theban Bacchus joins the maddening throng,
  O god of wine and mirth and song!
Now with thy torch destroy the base inglorious god.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

Scene I.

Œdipus, Chorus. *The People assembled.*

Œdi. Your prayers are heard: and if you will obey
Your king, and hearken to his words, you soon
Shall find relief; myself will heal your woes.
I was a stranger to the dreadful deed,
A stranger e'en to the report till now;
And yet without some traces of the crime
I should not urge this matter; therefore hear me.
I speak to all the citizens of Thebes,
Myself a citizen—observe me well:
If any know the murderer of Laius,
Let him reveal it; I command you all.
But if restrained by dread of punishment
He hide the secret, let him fear no more;
For nought but exile shall attend the crime
Whene'er confessed; if by a foreign hand
The horrid deed was done, who points him out
Commands our thanks, and meets a sure reward;
But if there be who knows the murderer,
And yet conceals him from us, mark his fate,
Which here I do pronounce: Let none receive
Throughout my kingdom, none hold converse with him,
Nor offer prayer, nor sprinkle o'er his head
The sacred cup; let him be driven from all,
By all abandoned, and by all accursed,
For so the Delphic oracle declared;

And therefore to the gods I pay this duty
And to the dead. Oh! may the guilty wretch,
Whether alone, or by his impious friends
Assisted, he performed the horrid deed,
Denied the common benefits of nature,
Wear out a painful life! And oh! if here,
Within my palace, I conceal the traitor,
On me and mine alight the vengeful curse!
To you, my people, I commit the care
Of this important business; 'tis my cause,
The cause of Heaven, and your expiring country.
E'en if the god had nought declared, to leave
This crime unexpiated were most ungrateful.
He was the best of kings, the best of men;
That sceptre now is mine which Laius bore;
His wife is mine; so would his children be
Did any live; and therefore am I bound,
E'en as he were my father, to revenge him.
Yes, I will try to find this murderer,
I owe it to the son of Labdacus,
To Polydorus, Cadmus, and the race
If great Agenor. Oh! if yet there are,
Who will not join me in the pious deed,
From such may earth withhold her annual store,
And barren be their bed, their life most wretched,
And their death cruel as the pestilence
That wastes our city! But on you, my Thebans,
Who wish us fair success, may justice smile
Propitious, and the gods for ever bless!

CHOR. O king! thy imprecations unappalled
I hear, and join thee, guiltless of the crime,
Nor knowing who committed it. The god
Alone, who gave the oracle, must clear
Its doubtful sense, and point out the offender.

ŒDI. 'Tis true. But who shall force the powers divine
To speak their hidden purpose?

CHOR. One thing more,
If I might speak.

ŒDI. Say on, whate'er thy mind
Shall dictate to thee.

CHOR. As amongst the gods
All-knowing Phœbus, so to mortal men
Doth sage Tiresias in foreknowledge sure
Shine forth pre-eminent. Perchance his aid
Might much avail us.

ŒDI. Creon did suggest
The same expedient, and by his advice
Twice have I sent for this Tiresias; much
I wonder that he comes not.

CHOR. 'Tis most fitting
We do consult him; for the idle tales
Which rumour spreads are not to be regarded.

ŒDI. What are those tales? for nought should we despise.

CHOR. 'Tis said some travellers did attack the king

ŒDI. It is; but still no proof appears.

CHOR. And yet,
If it be so, thy dreadful execration
Will force the guilty to confess.

ŒDI. Oh no!
Who fears not to commit the crime will ne'er
Be frightened at the curse that follows it.

CHOR. Behold he comes, who will discover all,
The holy prophet. See! they lead him hither;
He knows the truth and will reveal it to us.

SCENE II.

TIRESIAS, ŒDIPUS, CHORUS.

ŒDI. O sage Tiresias, thou who knowest all
That can be known, the things of heaven above
And earth below, whose mental eye beholds,
Blind as thou art, the state of dying Thebes,
And weeps her fate, to thee we look for aid,
On thee alone for safety we depend.
This answer, which perchance thou hast not heard,
Apollo gave: the plague, he said, should cease
When those who murdered Laius were discovered
And paid the forfeit of their crime by death

Or banishment. Oh! do not then conceal
Aught that thy art prophetic from the flight
Of birds or other omens may disclose.
Oh! save thyself, save this afflicted city,
Save Œdipus, avenge the guiltless dead
From this pollution! Thou art all our hope;
Remember, 'tis the privilege of man,
His noblest function, to assist the wretched.

TIR. Alas! what misery it is to know
When knowledge is thus fatal! O Tiresias!
Thou art undone! Would I had never come!

ŒDI. What sayst thou? Whence this strange dejection? Speak.

TIR. Let me be gone; 'twere better for us both
That I retire in silence: be advised.

ŒDI. It is ingratitude to Thebes, who bore
And cherished thee—it is unjust to all,
To hide the will of heaven.

TIR. 'Tis rash in thee
To ask, and rash I fear will prove my answer.

CHOR. Oh! do not, by the gods, conceal it from us,
Suppliant we all request, we all conjure thee.

TIR. You know not what you ask; I'll not unveil
Your miseries to you.

ŒDI. Knowst thou then our fate,
And wilt not tell it? Meanst thou to betray
Thy country and thy king?

TIR. I would not make
Myself and thee unhappy; why thus blame
My tender care, nor listen to my caution?

ŒDI. Wretch as thou art, thou wouldst provoke a stone—
Inflexible and cruel—still implored
And still refusing.

TIR. Thou condemn'st my warmth,
Forgetful of thy own.

ŒDI. Who would not rage
To see an injured people treated thus
With vile contempt?

TIR. What is decreed by heaven
Must come to pass, though I reveal it not.

ŒDI. Still, 'tis thy duty to inform us of it.
TIR. I'll speak no more, not though thine anger swell
E'en to its utmost.
ŒDI. Nor will I be silent.
I tell thee once for all thou wert thyself
Accomplice in this deed. Nay, more, I think,
But for thy blindness, wouldst with thy own hand
Have done it too.
TIR. 'Tis well. Now hear, Tiresias.
The sentence, which thou didst thyself proclaim,
Falls on thyself. Henceforth shall never man
Hold converse with thee, for thou art accursed—
The guilty cause of all this city's woes.
ŒDI. Audacious traitor! thinkst thou to escape
The hand of vengeance?
TIR. Yes, I fear thee not;
For truth is stronger than a tyrant's arm.
ŒDI. Whence didst thou learn this? Was it from thy art?
TIR. I learned it from thyself. Thou didst compel me
To speak, unwilling as I was.
ŒDI Once more
Repeat it then, that I may know my fate
More plainly still.
TIR. Is it not plain already?
Or meanst thou but to tempt me?
ŒDI. No, but say,
Speak it again.
TIR. Again then I declare
Thou art thyself the murderer whom thou seekst.
ŒDI. A second time thou shalt not pass unpunished.
TIR. What wouldst thou say, if I should tell thee all?
ŒDI. Say what thou wilt. For all is false.
TIR. Know then,
That Œdipus, in shameful bonds united
With those he loves, unconscious of his guilt,
Is yet most guilty.
ŒDI. Dar'st thou utter more,
And hope for pardon?

TIR. Yes, if there be strength
In sacred truth.
ŒDI. But truth dwells not in thee:
Thy body and thy mind are dark alike,
For both are blind. Thy ev'ry sense is lost.
TIR. Thou dost upbraid me with the loss of that
For which thyself ere long shall meet reproach
From every tongue.
ŒDI. Thou blind and impious traitor!
Thy darkness is thy safeguard, or this hour
Had been thy last.
TIR. It is not in my fate
To fall by thee. Apollo guards his priest.
ŒDI. Was this the tale of Creon, or thy own?
TIR. Creon is guiltless, and the crime is thine.
ŒDI. O riches, power, dominion! and thou far
Above them all, the best of human blessings,
Excelling wisdom, how doth envy love
To follow and oppress you! This fair kingdom,
Which by the nation's choice, and not my own,
I here possess, Creon, my faithful friend,
For such I thought him once, would now wrest from me,
And hath suborned this vile impostor here,
This wandering hypocrite, of sharpest sight
When interest prompts, but ignorant and blind
When fools consult him. Tell me, prophet, where
Was all thy art when the abhorred Sphynx
Alarmed our city? Wherefore did not then
Thy wisdom save us? Then the man divine
Was wanting. But thy birds refused their omens,
Thy god was silent. Then came Œdipus,
This poor, unlearned, uninstructed sage;
Who not from birds uncertain omens drew,
But by his own sagacious mind explored
The hidden mystery. And now thou com'st
To cast me from the throne my wisdom gained,
And share with Creon my divided empire.
But you should both lament your ill-got power,
You and your bold compeer. For thee, this moment,
But that I bear respect unto thy age,
I'd make thee rue thy execrable purpose.

CHOR. You both are angry, therefore both to blame;
Much rather should you join, with friendly zeal
And mutual ardour, to explore the will
Of all-deciding Heaven.

TIR. What though thou rul'st
O'er Thebes despotic, we are equal here:
I am Apollo's subject, and not thine,
Nor want I Creon to protect me. No;
I tell thee, king, this blind Tiresias tells thee,
Seeing thou seest not, knowst not where thou art,
What, or with whom. Canst thou inform me who
Thy parents are, and what thy horrid crimes
'Gainst thy own race, the living and the dead?
A father's and a mother's curse attend thee;
Soon shall their furies drive thee from the land,
And leave thee dark like me. What mountain then,
Or conscious shore, shall not return the groans
Of Œdipus, and echo to his woes?
When thou shalt look on the detested bed,
And in that haven where thou hop'st to rest,
Shalt meet with storm and tempest, then what ills
Shall fall on thee and thine! Now vent thy rage
On old Tiresias and the guiltless Creon;
We shall be soon avenged, for ne'er did Heaven
Cut off a wretch so base, so vile as thou art.

ŒDI. Must I bear this from thee? Away, begone!
Home, villain, home!

TIR. I did not come to thee
Unsent for.

ŒDI. Had I thought thou wouldst have thus
Insulted me, I had not called thee hither.

TIR. Perhaps thou holdst Tiresias as a fool
And madman; but thy parents thought me wise.

ŒDI. My parents, saidst thou? Speak, who were my parents?

TIR. This day, that gives thee life, shall give thee death.

ŒDI. Still dark, and still perplexing are the words
Thou utter'st.

TIR. 'Tis thy business to unriddle,
And therefore thou canst best interpret them.

ŒDI. Thou dost reproach me for my virtues.
TIR. They,
And thy good fortune, have undone thee.
ŒDI. Since
I saved the city, I'm content.
TIR. Farewell.
Boy, lead me hence.
ŒDI. Away with him, for here
His presence but disturbs us; being gone,
We shall be happier.
TIR. Œdipus, I go,
But first inform me, for I fear thee not,
Wherefore I came. Know then, I came to tell thee,
The man thou seekst, the man on whom thou poureds
Thy execrations, e'en the murderer
Of Laius, now is here—a seeming stranger
And yet a Theban. He shall suffer soon
For all his crimes: from light and affluence driven
To penury and darkness, poor and blind,
Propped on his staff, and from his native land
Expelled, I see him in a foreign clime
A helpless wanderer; to his sons at once
A father and a brother; child and husband
Of her from whom he sprang. Adulterous,
Incestuous parricide, now fare thee well!
Go, learn the truth, and if it be not so,
Say I have ne'er deserved the name of prophet.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

When will the guilty wretch appear,
Whom Delphi's sacred oracle demands;
Author of crimes too black for mortal ear,
Dipping in royal blood his sacrilegious hands?
Swift as the storm by rapid whirlwinds driven;
Quick let him fly th' impending wrath of Heaven;
For lo! the angry son of Jove,
Armed with red lightnings from above,
Pursues the murderer with immortal hate,
And round him spreads the snares of unrelenting fate.

Antistrophe I.

From steep Parnassus' rocky cave,
Covered with snow, came forth the dread command;
Apollo thence his sacred mandate gave,
To search the man of blood through every land:
Silent and sad, the weary wanderer roves
O'er pathless rocks and solitary groves,
Hoping to 'scape the wrath divine,
Denounced from great Apollo's shrine;
Vain hopes to 'scape the fate by Heaven decreed,
For vengeance hovers still o'er his devoted head.

Strophe 2.

Tiresias, famed for wisdom's lore,
Hath dreadful ills to Œdipus divined;
And as his words mysterious I explore,
Unnumbered doubts perplex my anxious mind.
Now raised by hope, and now with fears oppressed,
Sorrow and joy alternate fill my breast:
How should these hapless kings be foes,
When never strife between them rose?
Or why should Laius, slain by hands unknown,
Bring foul disgrace on Polybus' unhappy son?

Antistrophe 2.

From Phœbus and all-seeing Jove
Nought can be hid of actions here below;
But earthly prophets may deceitful prove,
And little more than other mortals know:
Though much in wisdom man doth man excel,
In all that 's human error still must dwell:
Could he commit the bloody deed,
Who from the Sphinx our city freed?
Oh, no! he never shed the guiltless blood;
The Sphynx declares him wise, and innocent, and good.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

Scene I.

Creon, Chorus

Creon. O citizens, with grief I hear your king
Hath blasted the fair fame of guiltless Creon!
And most unjustly brands me with a crime
My soul abhors: whilst desolation spreads
On every side, and universal ruin
Hangs o'er the land, if I in word or deed
Could join to swell the woes of hapless Thebes,
I were unworthy—nay, I would not wish—
To live another day: alas! my friends,
Thus to be deemed a traitor to my country,
To you my fellow-citizens, to all
That hear me, 'tis infamy and shame;
I cannot, will not bear it.

Chor. 'Twas th' effect
Of sudden anger only—what he said
But could not think.

Creon. Who told him I suborned
The prophet to speak falsely? What could raise
This vile suspicion?

Chor. Such he had, but whence
I know not.

Creon. Talked he thus with firm composure
And confidence of mind?

Chor. I cannot say;
'Tis not for me to know the thoughts of kings,
Or judge their actions! But behold! he comes.

Scene II.

Œdipus, Creon, Chorus.

Œdi. Ha! Creon here? And dar'st thou thus approach
My palace, thou who wouldst have murdered me,

And ta'en my kingdom? By the gods I ask thee;
Answer me, traitor, didst thou think me fool,
Or coward, that I could not see thy arts,
Or had not strength to vanquish them? What madness,
What strange infatuation led thee on,
Without or force or friends, to grasp at empire,
Which only their united force can give?
What wert thou doing?

CREON. Hear what I shall answer,
Then judge impartial.

ŒDI. Thou canst talk it well,
But I shall ne'er attend to thee; thy guilt
Is plain; thou art my deadliest foe.

CREON. But hear
What I shall urge.

ŒDI. Say not thou art innocent.

CREON. If self-opinion void of reason seem
Conviction to thee, know, thou err'st most grossly

ŒDI. And thou more grossly, if thou thinkst to pass
Unpunished for this injury to thy friend.

CREON. I should not, were I guilty; but what crime
Have I committed? Tell me.

ŒDI. Wert not thou
The man who urged me to require the aid
Of your all-knowing prophet?

CREON. True, I was;
I did persuade you; so I would again.

ŒDI. How long is it since Laius——

CREON. Laius! What?

ŒDI. Since Laius fell by hands unknown?

CREON. A long,
Long tract of years.

ŒDI. Was this Tiresias then
A prophet?

CREON. Ay; in wisdom and in fame
As now excelling.

ŒDI. Did he then say aught
Concerning me?

CREON. I never heard he did.

ŒDI. Touching this murder, did you ne'er inquire
Who were the authors?

CREON. Doubtless; but in vain.
ŒDI. Why did not this same prophet then inform you
CREON. I know not that, and when I'm ignorant
I'm always silent.
ŒDI. What concerns thyself
At least thou knowst, and therefore shouldst declare it.
CREON. What is it? Speak; and if 'tis in my power,
I'll answer thee.
ŒDI. Thou knowst, if this Tiresias
Had not combined with thee, he would not thus
Accuse me as the murderer of Laius.
CREON. What he declares, thou best canst tell: of me,
What thou requirest, myself am yet to learn.
ŒDI. Go, learn it then; but ne'er shalt thou discover,
That Œdipus is guilty.
CREON. Art not thou
My sister's husband?
ŒDI. Granted.
CREON. Joined with her,
Thou rul'st o'er Thebes.
ŒDI. 'Tis true, and all she asks
Most freely do I give her.
CREON. Is not Creon
In honour next to you?
ŒDI. Thou art; and therefore
The more ungrateful.
CREON. Hear what I shall plead
And thou wilt never think so. Tell me, prince,
Is there a man who would prefer a throne,
With all its dangers, to an equal rank
In peace and safety? I am not of those
Who choose the name of king before the power;
Fools only make such wishes: I have all
From thee, and fearless I enjoy it all:
Had I the sceptre, often must I act
Against my will. Know then, I am not yet
So void of sense and reason as to quit
A real 'vantage for a seeming good.
Am I not happy, am I not revered,
Embraced, and loved by all? To me they come
Who want thy favour, and by me acquire it:

What then should Creon wish for; shall he leave
All this for empire? Bad desires corrupt
The fairest mind. I never entertained
A thought so vile, nor would I lend my aid
To forward such base purposes. But go
To Delphos, ask the sacred oracle
If I have spoke the truth; if there you find
That with the prophet I conspired, destroy
The guilty Creon; not thy voice alone
Shall then condemn me, for myself will join
In the just sentence. But accuse me not
On weak suspicion's most uncertain test.
Justice would never call the wicked good,
Or brand fair virtue with the name of vice,
Unmerited: to cast away a friend,
Faithful and just, is to deprive ourselves
Of life and being, which we hold most dear:
But time and time alone revealeth all;
That only shows the good man's excellence:
A day sufficeth to unmask the wicked.

CHOR. O king! his caution merits your regard;
Who judge in haste do seldom judge aright.

ŒDI. When they are quick who plot against my life,
'Tis fit I should be quick in my defence;
If I am tame and silent, all they wish
Will soon be done, and Œdipus must fall.

CREON. What wouldst thou have? my banishment?

ŒDI. Thy death,

CREON. But first inform me wherefore I should die.

ŒDI. Dost thou rebel then? Wilt thou not submit?

CREON. Not when I see thee thus deceived.

ŒDI. 'Tis fit
I should defend my own.

CREON. And so should I.

ŒDI. Thou art a traitor.

CREON. What if it should prove
I am not so.

ŒDI. A king must be obeyed.

CREON. Not if his orders are unjust.

ŒDI. O Thebes!
O citizens!

CREON. I too can call on Thebes;
She is my country.
CHOR. Oh! no more, my lords;
For see, Jocasta comes in happiest hour
To end your contest.

SCENE III.

JOCASTA, CREON, ŒDIPUS, CHORUS.

JOC. Whence this sudden tumult?
O princes! Is this well, at such a time
With idle broils to multiply the woes
Of wretched Thebes? Home, home, for shame! nor thus
With private quarrels swell the public ruin.
CREON. Sister, thy husband hath most basely used me;
He threatens me with banishment or death.
ŒDI. I do confess it; for he did conspire
With vile and wicked arts against my life.
CREON. Oh! may I never prosper, but accursed,
Unpitied, perish if I ever did.
JOC. Believe him, Œdipus; revere the gods
Whom he contests, if thou dost love Jocasta;
Thy subjects beg it of thee.
CHOR. Hear, O king!
Consider, we entreat thee.
ŒDI. What wouldst have?
Think you I'll e'er submit to him?
CHOR. Revere
His character, his oath, both pleading for him
ŒDI. But know you what you ask?
CHOR. We do.
ŒDI. What is it?
CHOR. We ask thee to believe a guiltless friend,
Nor cast him forth dishonoured thus, on slight
Suspicion's weak surmise.
ŒDI. Requesting this,
You do request my banishment, or death.
CHOR. No; by yon leader of the heavenly host,

Th' immortal sun, I had not such a thought;
I only felt for Thebes' distressful state,
And would not have it by domestic strife
Embittered thus.

ŒDI. Why, let him then depart:
If Œdipus must die, or leave his country
For shameful exile, be it so; I yield
To thy request, not his; for hateful still
Shall Creon ever be.

CREON. Thy stubborn soul
Bends with reluctance, and when anger fires it
Is terrible; but natures formed like thine
Are their own punishment.

ŒDI. Wilt thou not hence?
Wilt not begone?

CREON. I go; thou knowst me not;
But these will do me justice. [*Exit* CREON.

SCENE IV.

JOCASTA, ŒDIPUS, CHORUS.

CHOR. Princess, now
Persuade him to retire.

JOC. First, let me know
The cause of this dissension.

CHOR. From reports
Uncertain, and suspicions most injurious,
The quarrel rose.

JOC. Was th' accusation mutual?

CHOR. It was.

JOC. What followed then?

CHOR. Ask me no more;
Enough 's already known; we 'll not repeat
The woes of hapless Thebes.

ŒDI. You are all blind,
Insensible, unjust; you love me not,
Yet boast your piety.

CHOR. I said before,
Again I say, that not to love my king

E'en as myself, would mark me for the worst
Of men. For thou didst save expiring Thebes.
Oh! rise once more, protect, preserve thy country!

JOC. O king! inform me, whence this strange dissension?

ŒDI. I'll tell thee, my Jocasta, for thou knowst
The love I bear thee, what this wicked Creon
Did artfully devise against me.

JOC. Speak it,
If he indeed be guilty.

ŒDI. Creon says
That I did murder Laius.

JOC. Spake he this
As knowing it himself, or from another?

ŒDI. He had suborned that evil-working priest,
And sharpens every tongue against his king.

JOC. Let not a fear perplex thee, Œdipus;
Mortals know nothing of futurity,
And these prophetic seers are all impostors;
I'll prove it to thee. Know then, Laius once,
Not from Apollo, but his priests, received
An oracle, which said it was decreed
He should be slain by his own son, the offspring
Of Laius and Jocasta. Yet he fell
By strangers, murdered, for so fame reports,
By robbers, in the place where three ways meet.
A son was born, but ere three days had passed
The infant's feet were bored. A servant took
And left him on the pathless mountain's top,
To perish there. Thus Phœbus ne'er decreed
That he should kill his father, or that Laius,
Which much he feared, should by his son be slain.
Such is the truth of oracles. Henceforth
Regard them not. What heaven would have us know,
It can with ease unfold, and will reveal it.

ŒDI. What thou hast said, Jocasta, much disturbs me;
I tremble at it.

JOC. Wherefore shouldst thou fear?

ŒDI. Methought I heard thee say, Laius was slain
Where three ways meet.

Joc. 'Twas so reported then,
And is so still.
Œdi. Where happened the misfortune?
Joc. In Phocis, where the roads unite that lead
To Delphi and to Daulia.
Œdi. How long since?
Joc. A little time ere you began to reign
O'er Thebes, we heard it.
Œdi. O almighty Jove!
What wilt thou do with me?
Joc. Why talkst thou thus?
Œdi. Ask me no more; but tell me of this Laius:
What was his age and stature?
Joc. He was tall;
His hairs just turning to the silver hue;
His form not much unlike thy own.
Œdi. O me
Sure I have called down curses on myself
Unknowing.
Joc. Ha! what sayst thou, Œdipus?
I tremble whilst I look on thee.
Œdi. Oh! much
I fear the prophet saw too well; but say,
One thing will make it clear.
Joc. I dread to hear it;
Yet speak, and I will tell thee.
Œdi. Went he forth
With few attendants, or a numerous train,
In kingly pomp?
Joc. They were but five in all,
The herald with them; but one chariot there,
Which carried Laius.
Œdi. Oh! 'tis but too plain.
Who brought the news?
Joc. A servant, who alone
Escaped with life.
Œdi. That servant, is he here?
Joc. Oh no! His master slain, when he returned
And saw thee on the throne of Thebes, with prayer
Most earnest he beseeched me to dismiss him,
That he might leave this city, where he wished

No longer to be seen, but to retire,
And feed my flocks; I granted his request,
For that and more his honest services
Had merited.

ŒDI. I beg he may be sent for
Immediately.

JOC. He shall; but wherefore is it?

ŒDI. I fear thou'st said too much, and therefore wish
To see him.

JOC. He shall come; but, O my lord!
Am I not worthy to be told the cause
Of this distress?

ŒDI. Thou art, and I will tell thee;
Thou art my hope—to whom should I impart
My sorrows, but to thee? Know then, Jocasta,
I am the son of Polybus, who reigns
At Corinth, and the Dorian Merope
His queen; there long I held the foremost rank,
Honoured and happy, when a strange event
(For strange it was, though little meriting
The deep concern I felt) alarmed me much:
A drunken reveller at a feast proclaimed
That I was only the supposed son
Of Corinth's king. Scarce could I bear that day
The vile reproach. The next, I sought my parents
And asked of them the truth; they too, enraged,
Resented much the base indignity.
I liked their tender warmth, but still I felt
A secret anguish, and, unknown to them,
Sought out the Pythian oracle. In vain.
Touching my parents nothing could I learn;
But dreadful were the miseries it denounced
Against me. 'Twas my fate, Apollo said,
To wed my mother, to produce a race
Accursed and abhorred; and last, to slay
My father who begat me. Sad decree!
Lest I should e'er fulfil the dire prediction,
Instant I fled from Corinth, by the stars
Guiding my hapless journey to the place
Where thou report'st this wretched king was slain.
But I will tell thee the whole truth. At length

I came to where the three ways meet, when, lo!
A herald, with another man like him
Whom thou describst, and in a chariot, met me.
Both strove with violence to drive me back;
Enraged, I struck the charioteer, when straight,
As I advanced, the old man saw, and twice
Smote me o' th' head, but dearly soon repaid
The insult on me; from his chariot rolled
Prone on the earth, beneath my staff he fell,
And instantly expired! Th' attendant train
All shared his fate. If this unhappy stranger
And Laius be the same, lives there a wretch
So cursed, so hateful to the gods as I am?
Nor citizen nor alien must receive,
Or converse, or communion hold with me,
But drive me forth with infamy and shame.
The dreadful curse pronounced with my own lips
Shall soon o'ertake me. I have stained the bed
Of him whom I had murdered; am I then
Aught but pollution? If I fly from hence,
The bed of incest meets me, and I go
To slay my father Polybus, the best,
The tenderest parent. This must be the work
Of some malignant power. Ye righteous gods!
Let me not see that day, but rest in death,
Rather than suffer such calamity.

CHOR. O king! we pity thy distress; but wait
With patience his arrival, and despair not.

ŒDI. That shepherd is my only hope: Jocasta,
Would he were here!

JOC. Suppose he were; what then?
What wouldst thou do?

ŒDI. I'll tell thee: if he says
The same as thou dost, I am safe and guiltless.

JOC. What said I, then?

ŒDI. Thou saidst he did report
Laius was slain by robbers; if 'tis true
He fell by numbers, I am innocent,
For I was unattended; if but one
Attacked and slew him, doubtless I am he.

Joc. Be satisfied it must be as he first
Reported it; he cannot change the tale:
Not I alone, but the whole city heard it.
Or grant he should, the oracle was ne'er
Fulfilled; for Phœbus said, Jocasta's son
Should slay his father. That could never be;
For, oh! Jocasta's son long since is dead.
He could not murder Laius; therefore never
Will I attend to prophecies again.

ŒDI. Right, my Jocasta; but, I beg thee, send
And fetch this shepherd; do not fail.

Joc. I will
This moment; come, my lord, let us go in:
I will do nothing but what pleases thee. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

CHORUS.

Strophe I.

Grant me henceforth, ye powers divine,
    In virtue's purest paths to tread!
    In every word, in every deed,
May sanctity of manners ever shine!
    Obedient to the laws of Jove,
    The laws descended from above,
Which, not like those by feeble mortals given,
    Buried in dark oblivion lie,
    Or worn by time decay, and die,
But bloom eternal like their native heaven!

Antistrophe I.

Pride first gave birth to tyranny:
    That hateful vice, insulting pride,
    When, every human power defied,
She lifts to glory's height her votary;
    Soon stumbling, from her tottering throne
    She throws the wretched victim down.

But may the god indulgent hear my prayer,
That god whom humbly I adore,
Oh! may he smile on Thebes once more,
And take its wretched monarch to his care!

Strophe 2.

Perish the impious and profane,
Who, void of reverential fear,
Nor justice nor the laws revere,
Who leave their god for pleasure or for gain!
Who swell by fraud their ill-got store,
Who rob the wretched and the poor!
If vice unpunished virtue's meed obtain.
Who shall refrain the impetuous soul,
The rebel passions who control,
Or wherefore do I lead this choral train?

Antistrophe 2.

No more to Delphi's sacred shrine
Need we with incense now repair,
No more shall Phocis hear our prayer;
Nor fair Olympia see her rites divine;
If oracles no longer prove
The power of Phœbus and of Jove.
Great lord of all, from thy eternal throne
Behold, how impious men defame
Thy loved Apollo's honoured name;
Oh! guard his rights, and vindicate thy own. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

JOCASTA, CHORUS.

JOCASTA. Sages and rulers of the land, I come
To seek the altars of the gods, and there
With incense and oblations to appease

Offended Heaven. My Œdipus, alas!
No longer wise and prudent, as you all
Remember once he was, with present things
Compares the past, nor judges like himself;
Unnumbered cares perplex his anxious mind,
And every tale awakes new terrors in him;
Vain is my counsel, for he hears me not.
First, then, to thee, O Phœbus! for thou still
Art near to help the wretched, we appeal,
And suppliant beg thee now to grant thy aid
Propitious; deep is our distress; for, oh!
We see our pilot sinking at the helm,
And much already fear the vessel lost.

Scene II.

Shepherd from Corinth, Jocasta, Chorus.

Shep. Can you instruct me, strangers, which way lies
The palace of king Œdipus; himself
I would most gladly see. Can you inform me?
Chor. This is the palace; he is now within;
Thou seest his queen before thee.
Shep. Ever blest
And happy with the happy mayst thou live!
Joc. Stranger, the same good wish to thee, for well
Thy words deserve it; but say, wherefore com'st thou,
And what's thy news?
Shep. To thee, and to thy husband,
Pleasure and joy.
Joc. What pleasure? And whence art thou?
Shep. From Corinth. To be brief, I bring thee tidings
Of good and evil.
Joc. Ha! what mean thy words
Ambiguous?
Shep. Know then, if report say true,
The Isthmian people will choose Œdipus
Their sovereign.

Joc. Is not Polybus their king?

Shep. No; Polybus is dead.

Joc. What sayst thou? Dead?

Shep. If I speak falsely, may death seize on me!

Joc. [*to one of her* Attendants]. Why fliest thou not to tell thy master? Hence!

What are you now, you oracles divine?
Where is your truth? The fearful Œdipus
From Corinth fled, lest he should slay the king,
This Polybus, who perished, not by him,
But by the hand of Heaven.

Scene III.

Œdipus, Jocasta, Shepherd, Chorus.

Œdi. My dear Jocasta,
Why hast thou called me hither?

Joc. Hear this man,
And when thou hearst him, mark what faith is due
To your revered oracles.

Œdi. Who is he?
And what doth he report?

Joc. He comes from Corinth,
And says thy father Polybus is dead.

Œdi. What sayst thou, stranger? Speak to me—oh! speak!

Shep. If touching this thou first desir'st my answer;
Know, he is dead.

Œdi. How died he? Say, by treason,
Or some disease?

Shep. Alas! a little force
Will lay to rest the weary limbs of age.

Œdi. Distemper then did kill him?

Shep. That in part,
And part a length of years that wore him down.

Œdi. Now, my Jocasta, who shall henceforth trust
To prophecies, and seers, and clamorous birds
With their vain omens—they who had decreed
That I should kill my father. He thou seest

Beneath the earth lies buried, whilst I live
In safety here and guiltless of his blood:
Unless perhaps sorrow for loss of me
Shortened his days, thus only could I kill
My father. But he's gone, and to the shades
Hath carried with him those vain oracles
Of fancied ills, no longer worth my care.

Joc. Did I not say it would be thus?

Œdi. Thou didst;
But I was full of fears.

Joc. Henceforth, no more
Indulge them.

Œdi. But my mother's bed—that still
Must be avoided. I must fly from that.

Joc. Why should man fear, whom chance, and chance alone,
Doth ever rule? Foreknowledge, all is vain,
And can determine nothing. Therefore best
It is to live as fancy leads, at large,
Uncurbed, and only subject to our will.
Fear not thy mother's bed. Oftimes in dreams
Have men committed incest. But his life
Will ever be most happy who contemns
Such idle phantoms.

Œdi. Thou wert right, Jocasta,
Did not my mother live. But as it is,
Spite of thy words, I must be anxious still.

Joc. Think on thy father's death; it is a light
To guide thee here.

Œdi. It is so. Yet I fear
Whilst she survives him.

Shep. Who is it you mean?
What woman fear you?

Œdi. Merope, the wife
Of Polybus.

Shep. And wherefore fear you her?

Œdi. Know, stranger, a most dreadful oracle
Concerning her affrights me.

Shep. May I know it,
Or must it be revealed to none but thee?

Œdi. Oh no! I'll tell thee. Phœbus hath declared

That Œdipus should stain his mother's bed,
And dip his hands in his own father's blood;
Wherefore I fled from Corinth, and lived here,
In happiness indeed. But still thou knowst
It is a blessing to behold our parents,
And that I had not.

SHEP. Was it for this cause
Thou wert an exile then?

ŒDI. It was. I feared
That I might one day prove my father's murderer.

SHEP. What if I come, O king! to banish hence
Thy terrors, and restore thy peace?

ŒDI. Oh stranger!
Couldst thou do this, I would reward thee nobly.

SHEP. Know then, for this I came. I came to serve,
And make thee happy.

ŒDI. But I will not go
Back to my parents.

SHEP. Son, I see thou knowst not
What thou art doing.

ŒDI. Wherefore thinkst thou so?
By heaven I beg thee then do thou instruct me.

SHEP. If thou didst fly from Corinth for this cause——

ŒDI. Apollo's dire predictions still affright me.

SHEP. Fearst thou pollution from thy parents?

ŒDI. That,
And that alone I dread.

SHEP. Thy fears are vain.

ŒDI. Not if they are my parents.

SHEP. Polybus
Was not akin to thee.

ŒDI. What sayst thou? Speak
Say, was not Polybus my father?

SHEP. No;
No more than he is mine.

ŒDI. Why call me then
His son?

SHEP. Because long since I gave thee to him—
He did receive thee from these hands.

ŒDI. Indeed!
And could he love another's child so well?

SHEP. He had no children; that persuaded him
To take and keep thee.
ŒDI. Didst thou buy me, then,
Or am I thine, and must I call thee father?
SHEP. I found thee in Cithæron's woody vale.
ŒDI. What brought thee there?
SHEP. I came to feed my flocks
On the green mountain's side.
ŒDI. It seems thou wert
A wandering shepherd.
SHEP. Thy deliverer;
I saved thee from destruction.
ŒDI. How? What then
Had happened to me?
SHEP. Thy own feet will best
Inform thee of that circumstance.
ŒDI. Alas!
Why callst thou to remembrance a misfortune
Of so long date?
SHEP. 'Twas I who loosed the tendons
Of thy bored feet.
ŒDI. It seems in infancy
I suffered much, then.
SHEP. To this incident
Thou ow'st thy name.
ŒDI. My father, or my mother,
Who did it? Knowst thou?
SHEP. He who gave thee to me
Must tell thee that.
ŒDI. Then from another's hand
Thou didst receive me.
SHEP. Ay; another shepherd.
ŒDI. Who was he? Canst thou recollect?
SHEP. 'Twas one,
At least so called, of Laius' family.
ŒDI. Laius, who ruled at Thebes?
SHEP. The same; this man
Was shepherd to King Laius.
ŒDI. Lives he still?
And could I see him?
SHEP. [*pointing to the* CHORUS]. Some of these perhaps,
His countrymen, may give you information.

ŒDI. [*to the* CHORUS]. Oh! speak, my friends, if any of you know
This shepherd; whether still he lives at Thebes,
Or in some neighbouring country. Tell me quick,
For it concerns us near.

CHOR. It must be he
Whom thou didst lately send for; but the queen
Can best inform thee.

ŒDI. Knowst thou, my Jocasta,
Whether the man whom thou didst order hither,
And whom the shepherd speaks of, be the same?

JOC Whom meant he? for I know not. Œdipus,
Think not so deeply of this thing.

ŒDI. Good heaven!
Forbid, Jocasta, I should now neglect
To clear my birth, when thus the path is marked
And open to me.

JOC. Do not, by the gods
I beg thee, do not, if thy life be dear,
Make further search, for I have felt enough
Already from it.

ŒDI. Rest thou satisfied;
Were I descended from a race of slaves,
'Twould not dishonour thee.

JOC. Yet hear me; do not,
Once more I beg thee, do not search this matter.

ŒDI. I will not be persuaded. I must search
And find it too.

JOC. I know it best, and best
Advise thee.

ŒDI. That advice perplexes more.

JOC. Oh! would to heaven that thou mayst never know
Or who, or whence thou art!

ŒDI. [*to the* ATTENDANTS]. Let some one fetch
That shepherd quick, and leave this woman here
To glory in her high descent.

JOC. Alas!
Unhappy Œdipus! that word alone
I now can speak: remember 'tis my last.

[*Exit* JOCASTA.

SCENE IV.

ŒDIPUS, CHORUS.

CHOR. Why fled the queen in such disorder hence?
Sorely distressed she seemed, and much I fear
Her silence bodes some sad event.
ŒDI. Whate'er
May come of that, I am resolved to know
The secret of my birth, how mean soever
It chance to prove. Perhaps her sex's pride
May make her blush to find I was not born
Of noble parents; but I call myself
The son of fortune, my indulgent mother,
Whom I shall never be ashamed to own.
The kindred months that are like me, her children,
The years that roll obedient to her will,
Have raised me from the lowest state to power
And splendour. Wherefore, being what I am,
I need not fear the knowledge of my birth.

SCENE V.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

If my prophetic soul doth well divine,
Ere on thy brow to-morrow's sun shall shine,
Cithæron, thou the mystery shalt unfold;
The doubtful Œdipus, no longer blind,
Shall soon his country and his father find,
And all the story of his birth be told.
Then shall we in grateful lays
Celebrate our monarch's praise,
And in the sprightly dance our songs triumphant raise.

Antistrophe.

What heavenly power gave birth to thee, O king!
From Pan, the god of mountains, didst thou spring,
With some fair daughter of Apollo joined;
Art thou from him who o'er Cyllene reigns,
Swift Hermes, sporting in Arcadia's plains?
Some nymph of Helicon did Bacchus find—
Bacchus, who delights to rove
Through the forest, hill and grove—
And art thou, prince, the offspring of their love?

SCENE VI.

ŒDIPUS, CHORUS, SHEPHERD FROM CORINTH.

ŒDI. If I may judge of one whom yet I ne'er
Had converse with, yon old man, whom I see
This way advancing, must be that same shepherd
We lately sent for, by his age and mien,
E'en as this stranger did describe him to us;
My servants too are with him. But you best
Can say, for you must know him well.
CHOR. 'Tis he,
My lord; the faithful shepherd of King Laius.
ŒDI. [*to the* SHEPHERD *from Corinth*]. What sayst thou, stranger?— is it he?
SHEP. It is.

SCENE VII.

OLD SHEPHERD, ŒDIPUS, SHEPHERD FROM CORINTH, CHORUS.

ŒDI. Now answer me, old man; look this way—speak:
Didst thou belong to Laius?
OLD SHEP. Sir, I did;
No hireling slave, but in his palace bred,
I served him long.

ŒDI. What was thy business there?
OLD SHEP. For my life's better part I tended sheep.
ŒDI. And whither didst thou lead them?
OLD SHEP. To Cithæron,
And to the neighbouring plains.
ŒDI. Behold this man:
[*pointing to the* SHEPHERD *of Corinth*
Dost thou remember to have seen him?
OLD SHEP. Whom?
What hath he done?
ŒDI. Him, who now stands before thee,
Callst thou to mind, or converse or connection
Between you in times past?
OLD SHEP. I cannot say
I recollect it now.
SHEP. *of Corinth.* I do not wonder
He should forget me, but I will recall
Some facts of ancient date. He must remember
When on Cithæron we together fed
Our several flocks, in daily converse joined
From spring to autumn, and when winter bleak
Approached, retired. I to my little cot
Conveyed my sheep; he to the palace led
His fleecy care. Canst thou remember this?
OLD SHEP. I do; but that is long, long since
SHEP. *of Corinth.* It is;
But say, good shepherd, canst thou call to mind
An infant whom thou didst deliver to me,
Requesting me to breed him as my own?
OLD SHEP. Ha! wherefore askst thou this?
SHEP. *of Corinth* [*pointing to* ŒDIPUS]. Behold him here,
That very child.
OLD SHEP. Oh! say it not: away!
Perdition on thee!
ŒDI. Why reprove him thus?
Thou art thyself to blame, old man.
OLD SHEP. In what
Am I to blame, my lord?
ŒDI. Thou wilt not speak
Touching this boy.

Old Shep. Alas! poor man, he knows not
What he hath said.

Œdi. If not by softer means
To be persuaded, force shall wring it from thee.

Old Shep. Treat not an old man harshly.

Œdi. [*to the* Attendants]. Bind his hands.

Old Shep. Wherefore, my lord? What wouldst thou have me do?

Œdi. That child he talks of, didst thou give it to him?

Old Shep. I did; and would to heaven I then had died!

Œdi. Die soon thou shalt, unless thou tell'st it all.

Old Shep. Say, rather if I do.

Œdi. This fellow means
To trifle with us, by his dull delay.

Old Shep. I do not; said I not I gave the child?

Œdi. Whence came the boy? Was he thy own, or who
Did give him to thee?

Old Shep. From another hand
I had received him.

Œdi. Say, what hand? From whom?
Whence came he?

Old Shep. Do not—by the gods I beg thee,
Do not inquire.

Œdi. Force me to ask again,
And thou shalt die.

Old Shep. In Laius' palace born——

Œdi. Son of a slave, or of the king?

Old Shep. Alas!
'Tis death for me to speak.

Œdi. And me to hear;
Yet say it.

Old Shep. He was called the son of Laius;
But ask the queen, for she can best inform thee.

Œdi. Did she then give the child to thee?

Old Shep. She did.

Œdi. For what?

Old Shep. To kill him.

Œdi. Kill her child! Inhuman
And barbarous mother!

OLD SHEP. A dire oracle
Affrighted, and constrained her to it.
ŒDI. Ha!
What oracle?
OLD SHEP. Which said, her son should slay
His parents.
ŒDI. Wherefore gav'st thou then the infant
To this old shepherd?
OLD SHEP. Pity moved me to it:
I hoped he would have soon conveyed his charge
To some far distant country; he, alas!
Preserved him but for misery and woe;
For, O my lord! if thou indeed art he,
Thou art of all mankind the most unhappy.
ŒDI. O me! at length the mystery 's unravelled;
'Tis plain, 'tis clear; my fate is all determined.
Those are my parents who should not have been
Allied to me; she is my wife, e'en she
Whom Nature had forbidden me to wed;
I have slain him who gave me life; and now
Of thee, O light! I take my last farewell,
For Œdipus shall ne'er behold thee more. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VIII.

CHORUS.

Strophe I.

O hapless state of human race!
How quick the fleeting shadows pass
Of transitory bliss below,
Where all is vanity and woe!
By thy example taught, O prince! we see
Man was not made for true felicity.

Antistrophe I.

Thou, Œdipus, beyond the rest
Of mortals wert supremely blest;
Whom every hand conspired to raise,
Whom every tongue rejoiced to praise,

When from the Sphinx thy all-preserving hand
Stretched forth its aid to save a sinking land.

Strophe 2.

Thy virtues raised thee to a throne,
And grateful Thebes was all thy own;
Alas! how changed that glorious name!
Lost are thy virtues and thy fame;
How couldst thou thus pollute thy father's bed?
How couldst thou thus thy hapless mother wed?

Antistrophe 2.

How could that bed unconscious bear
So long the vile incestuous pair?
But time, of quick and piercing sight,
Hath brought the horrid deed to light;
At length Jocasta owns her guilty flame,
And finds a husband and a child the same.

Epode.

Wretched son of Laius, thee
Henceforth may I never see,
But absent shed the pious tear,
And weep thy fate with grief sincere!
For thou didst raise our eyes to life and light,
To close them now in everlasting night.

ACT V.

Scene I.

Messenger, Chorus.

Messenger. Sages of Thebes, most honoured and revered,
If e'er the house of Labdacus was dear
And precious to you, what will be your grief

When I shall tell the most disastrous tale
You ever heard, and to your eyes present
A spectacle more dreadful than they yet
Did e'er behold: not the wide Danube's waves
Nor Phasis' streams can wash away the stains
Of this polluted palace; the dire crimes
Long time concealed at length are brought to light;
But those which spring from voluntary guilt
Are still more dreadful.

CHOR. Nothing can be worse
Than that we know already; bringst thou more
Misfortunes to us?

MES. To be brief, the queen,
Divine Jocasta's dead.

CHOR. Jocasta dead! Say, by what hand?

MES. Her own;
And what 's more dreadful, no one saw the deed.
What I myself beheld you all shall hear.
Inflamed with rage, soon as she reached the palace,
Instant retiring to the nuptial bed,
She shut the door, then raved and tore her hair,
Called out on Laius dead, and bade him think
On that unhappy son who murdered him
And stained his bed; then turning her sad eyes
Upon the guilty couch, she cursed the place
Where she had borne a husband from her husband,
And children from her child; what followed then
I know not, by the cries of Œdipus
Prevented, for on him our eyes were fixed
Attentive; forth he came, beseeching us
To lend him some sharp weapon, and inform him
Where he might find his mother and his wife,
His children's wretched mother and his own.
Some ill-designing power did then direct him
(For we were silent) to the queen's apartment;
Forcing the bolt, he rushed into the bed,
And found Jocasta, where we all beheld her,
Entangled in the fata noose, which soon
As he perceived, loosing the pendant rope,
Deeply he groaned, and casting on the ground
His wretched body, showed a piteous sight

To the beholders; on a sudden, thence
Starting, he plucked from off the robe she wore
A golden buckle that adorned her side,
And buried in his eyes the sharpened point,
Crying, he ne'er again would look on her,
Never would see his crimes or miseries more,
Or those whom guiltless he could ne'er behold,
Or those to whom he now must sue for aid.
His lifted eyelids then, repeating still
These dreadful plaints, he tore; whilst down his cheek
Fell showers of blood! Such fate the wretched pair
Sustained, partakers in calamity,
Fallen from a state of happiness (for none
Were happier once than they) to groans and death,
Reproach and shame, and every human woe.

CHOR. And where is now the poor unhappy man?

MES. Open the doors, he cries, and let all Thebes
Behold his parents' murderer, adding words
Not to be uttered; banished now, he says,
He must be, nor, devoted as he is
By his own curse, remain in this sad place.
He wants a kind conductor and a friend
To help him now, for 'tis too much to bear.
But you will see him soon, for lo! the doors
Are opened, and you will behold a sight
That would to pity move his deadliest foe.

SCENE II.

ŒDIPUS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

CHOR. Oh! horrid sight! more dreadful spectacle
Than e'er these eyes beheld! what madness urged thee
To this sad deed? What power malignant heaped
On thy poor head such complicated woe?
Unhappy man, alas! I would have held
Some converse with thee, but thy looks affright me;
I cannot bear to speak to thee.

ŒDI. O me!
Where am I? and whence comes the voice I hear?
Where art thou, fortune?

CHOR. Changed to misery,
Dreadful to hear, and dreadful to behold.

ŒDI. O cruel darkness! endless, hopeless night,
Shame, terrors, and unutterable woe!
More painful is the memory of my crimes
Than all the wounds my wild distraction made.

CHOR. Thus doubly cursed, O prince! I wonder not
At thy affliction.

ŒDI. Art thou here, my friend?
I know thy voice; thou wouldst not leave the wretched;
Thou art my faithful, kind assistant still.

CHOR. How couldst thou thus deprive thyself of sight?
What madness drove thee to the desperate deed?
What god inspired?

ŒDI. Apollo was the cause;
He was, my friends, the cause of all my woes;
But for these eyes—myself did quench their light—
I want not them; what use were they to me,
But to discover scenes of endless woe;

CHOR. 'Tis but too true.

ŒDI. What pleasure now remains
For Œdipus? He cannot joy in aught
To sight or ear delightful. Curse on him,
Whoe'er he was, that loosened my bound feet,
And saved me, in Cithæron's vale, from death!
I owe him nothing: had I perished then,
Much happier had it been for you, my friends,
And for myself.

CHOR. I too could wish thou hadst.

ŒDI. I should not then have murdered Laius; then
I had not ta'en Jocasta to my bed;
But now I am a guilty wretch, the son
Of a polluted mother, father now
To my own brothers, all that's horrible
To nature is the lot of Œdipus.

CHOR. Yet must I blame this cruel act, for sure
The loss of sight is worse than death itself.

ŒDI. I care not for thy counsel or thy praise;
For with what eyes could I have e'er beheld
My honoured father in the shades below,
Or my unhappy mother, both destroyed

By me? This punishment is worse than death,
And so it should be. Sweet had been the sight
Of my dear children—them I could have wished
To gaze upon; but I must never see
Or them, or this fair city, or the palace
Where I was born. Deprived of every bliss
By my own lips, which doomed to banishment
The murderer of Laius, and expelled
The impious wretch, by gods and men accursed:
Could I behold them after this? Oh no!
Would I could now with equal ease remove
My hearing too, be deaf as well as blind,
And from another entrance shut out woe!
To want our senses, in the hour of ill,
Is comfort to the wretched. O Cithæron!
Why didst thou e'er receive me, or received,
Why not destroy, that men might never know
Who gave me birth? O Polybus! O Corinth!
And thou, long time believed my father's palace,
Oh! what a foul disgrace to human nature
Didst thou receive beneath a prince's form!
Impious myself, and from an impious race.
Where is my splendour now? O Daulian path!
The shady forest, and the narrow pass
Where three ways meet, who drank a father's blood
Shed by these hands, do you not still remember
The horrid deed, and what, when here I came,
Followed more dreadful? Fatal nuptials, you
Produced me, you returned me to the womb
That bare me; thence relations horrible
Of fathers, sons, and brothers came; of wives,
Sisters, and mothers, sad alliance! all
That man holds impious and detestable.
But what in act is vile the modest tongue
Should never name. Bury me, hide me, friends,
From every eye; destroy me, cast me forth
To the wide ocean—let me perish there:
Do anything to shake off hated life.
Seize me; approach, my friends—you need not fear,
Polluted though I am, to touch me; none
Shall suffer for my crimes but I alone.

CHOR. In most fit time, my lord, the noble Creon
This way advances; he can best determine
And best advise; sole guardian now of Thebes,
To him thy power devolves.

ŒDI. What shall I say?
Can I apply to him for aid whom late
I deeply injured by unjust suspicion?

SCENE III.

CREON, ŒDIPUS, CHORUS.

CREON, I come not, prince, to triumph o'er thy woes
With vile reproach; I pity thy misfortunes.
But, O my Thebans! if you do not fear
The censure of your fellow-citizens,
At least respect the all-creating eye
Of Phœbus, who beholds you thus exposing
To public view a wretch accursed, polluted,
Whom neither earth can bear, nor sun behold,
Nor holy shower besprinkle. Take him hence
Within the palace; those who are by blood
United should alone be witnesses
Of such calamity.

ŒDI. O Creon! thou,
The best of men, and I the worst, how kind
Thou art to visit me! Oh! by the gods
Let me entreat thee, since beyond my hopes
Thou art so good, now hear me; what I ask,
Concerns thee most.

CREON. What is it thou desirest
Thus ardently?

ŒDI. I beg thee, banish me
From Thebes this moment, to some land remote,
Where I may ne'er converse with man again.

CREON. Myself long since had done it, but the gods
Must be consulted first.

ŒDI. Their will is known
Already, and their oracle declared
The guilty parricide should die.

CREON. It hath;
But, as it is, 'twere better to inquire
What must be done.

ŒDI. For such a wretch as me
Wouldst thou again explore the will of Heaven?

CREON. Thy hapless fate should teach us to believe,
And reverence the gods.

ŒDI. Now, Creon, list;
I beg thee, I conjure thee, let a tomb
Be raised, and all due honours paid to her
Who lies within: she was thy sister, Creon;
It is a duty which thou ow'st: for me,
I cannot hope this city now will deign
To keep me here. O Creon! let me go,
And seek the solitary mountain's top,
My own Cithæron, by my parents doomed
Long since to be the grave of Œdipus;
Where would I die, as they decreed I should.
Alas! I cannot, must not perish yet,
Till I have suffered evils worse than death,
For I was only saved to be unhappy;
But I must meet my fate, whate'er it be.
My sons are men, and wheresoever fortune
May place them, cannot want the means of life;
They shall not burthen thee; but, O my friend!
What will become of my unhappy daughters,
With tenderest love, beneath a father's hand,
Cherished so long? Oh! take them to thy care,
Thou best of men! Oh! might I but embrace them,
But shed a tear o'er their disastrous fate,
Might I be suffered but to touch them here,
I should rejoice, and think I saw them still.
But hark! methinks e'en now I hear the voice
Of my dear daughters; hath the gracious Creon,
In pity to my woes, already brought
My children to me?—is it so?

CREON. It is:
Thy wishes are prevented; they are here.

SCENE IV.

DAUGHTERS OF ŒDIPUS, ŒDIPUS, CREON, CHORUS.

ŒDI. May Heaven reward thee for this goodness to me,
And give thee much more bliss than I have known!
Now, my dear children, come towards me, come
Towards your father and your—brother; see
These sightless eyes, pierced by my own mad hands;
Behold that wretched father who begat you
Unknowingly on her who gave me birth;
I cannot see you now—I can but weep
Your fate, to think what hours of wretchedness
You have to know hereafter. Whither now
Must my poor children fly? From every feast
Joyless with grief and shame, shall you return;
And when the time shall come when riper years
Should give you to the nuptial bed, who then,
Careless of fame, will let his child partake
The infamy of my abhorred race,
Sprung from a wretch accursed, who killed his father,
And from the womb that bare him did beget
You my unhappy daughters? Such reproach
Must still be yours, to virgin solitude
Devoted ever, and a barren bed.
Son of Menæceus, thou alone art left
Their father now, for, oh! Jocasta's dead,
And I am—nothing. Do not then forsake
Thy kindred; nor, deserted and forlorn,
Suffer them still in penury and woe
To wander helpless, in their tender age:
Remember they have no support but thee.
O generous prince! have pity on them; give me
Thy friendly hand in promise of thy aid.
To you, my daughters, had your early years
Permitted, I had given my last advice:
Too young for counsel, all I ask of you
Is but to pray the gods that my sad life

May not be long ; but yours, my children, crowned
With many days, and happier far than mine.
CREON. It is enough; go in—thy grief transports thee
Beyond all bounds.
ŒDI. 'Tis hard ; but I submit.
CREON. The time demands it ; therefore go.
ŒDI. O Creon !
Knowst thou what now I wish ?
CREON. What is it ? Speak.
ŒDI. That I may quit this fatal place.
CREON. Thou ask'st
What Heaven alone can grant.
ŒDI. Alas ! to Heaven
I am most hateful.
CREON. Yet shalt thou obtain
What thou desirest.
ŒDI. Shall I indeed ?
CREON. Thou shalt ;
I never say aught that I do not mean.
ŒDI. Then let me go : may I depart ?
CREON. Thou mayst ·
But leave thy children.
ŒDI. Do not take them from me.
CREON. Thou must not always have thy will. Already
Thou 'st suffered for it.
CHOR. Thebans, now behold
The great, the mighty Œdipus, who once
The Sphinx's dark enigma could unfold,
Who less to fortune than to wisdom owed,
In virtue as in rank to all superior,
Yet fallen at last to deepest misery.
Let mortals hence be taught to look beyond
The present time, nor dare to say, a man
Is happy till the last decisive hour
Shall close his life without the taste of woe.

Œdipus Coloneus.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Œdipus.
Creon.
Antigone, } *Daughters of*
Ismene, } *Œdipus.*
Polynices, *Son of Œdipus.*
Theseus, *King of Athens.*
An Athenian.
Messenger.
Attendants *on Creon, Theseus, and Ismene.*
Chorus, *composed of Ancient Men of Thebes.*

SCENE.—*A Grove at the entrance to the Temple of the* Furies.

ACT I.

Scene I.

Œdipus, Antigone.

Œdipus. Where are we now, my dear Antigone?
Knowst thou the place? Will any here afford
Their scanty alms to a poor wanderer,
The banished Œdipus? I ask not much,
Yet less receive; but I am satisfied:
Long time hath made my woes familiar to me,
And I have learned to bear calamity.
But tell me, daughter, if thou seest a place,
Or sacred, or profane, where I may rest,
There set me down, from some inhabitant
A chance but we may learn where now we are,
And act, so strangers ought, as he directs us.

Ant. O Œdipus! my poor, unhappy father,
Far as my eyes can reach I see a city,
With lofty turrets crowned, and, if I err not,
This place is sacred, by the laurel shade
Olive and vine thick-planted, and the songs
Of nightingales sweet warbling through the grove;
Here sit thee down, and rest thy wearied limbs
On this rude stone; 'tis a long way for age
Like thine to travel.

Œdi. Place me here, and guard
A sightless wretch.

Ant. Alas! at such a time
Thou needst not tell Antigone her duty.

Œdi. Knowst thou not where we are?

Ant. As I have learned
From passing travellers, not far from Athens;
The place I know not; would you that I go
And straight inquire? But now I need not leave thee,
For, lo! a stranger comes this way, e'en now
He stands before you, he will soon inform us.

Scene II.

An Athenian, Œdipus, Antigone.

Œdi. Stranger, thou com'st in happy hour to tell us
What much we wish to know; let me then ask thee——

Athe. Ask nothing; speak not till thou art removed
From off that hallowed spot where now thou standst,
By human footsteps not to be profaned.

Œdi. To whom then is it sacred?

Athe. 'Tis a place
Where but to tread is impious, and to dwell
Forbidden; where the dreadful goddesses,
Daughters of Earth and Night, alone inhabit.

Œdi. Ha! let me hear their venerable names.

Athe. By other names in other climes adored,
The natives here call them Eumenides,
Th' all-seeing powers.

Œdi. Oh! that they would but smile

Propitious, and receive a suppliant's prayer,
That I might never leave this blest abode!
ATHE. What dost thou mean?
ŒDI. It suits my sorrows well.
ATHE. I must inform the citizens; till then
Remain.
ŒDI. Oh! do not scorn a wretched exile,
But tell me, stranger——
ATHE. Speak; I scorn thee not.
ŒDI. What place is this?
ATHE. I'll tell thee what I know.
This place is sacred all: great Neptune here
Presides, and he who bears the living fire,
Titan Prometheus; where thou treadst is called
The Brazen Way, the bulwark of our State:
From this equestrian hill, their safest guard,
The neighbouring villagers their general name
Derive, thence called Colonians all.
ŒDI. But say,
Are there who dwell here, then?
ATHE. There are, and called
From him they worship.
ŒDI. Is the power supreme
Lodged in the people's voice, or in the king?
ATHE. 'Tis in the king.
ŒDI. Who is he?
ATHE. Theseus, son
Of Ægeus, their last sovereign.
ŒDI. Who will go
And tell him——
ATHE. What! to come and meet thee here?
ŒDI. To tell him that a little help bestowed
Would amply be repaid.
ATHE. Why, what couldst thou do,
Dark as thou art?
ŒDI. My words will not be so.
ATHE. Then mark me, that thou err not; for to me
Thy fortunes seem ill-suited to thy nature,
Which is most noble; therefore stay thou here
Till I return; I will not go to Athens,
But ask these villagers, who sojourn here,
If thou mayst stay. [*Exit* ATHENIAN.

Scene III.

Œdipus, Antigone.

Œdi. My daughter, is he gone?
Ant. He is, and thou mayst safely speak, for I
Alone am with thee.
Œdi. Goddesses revered!
Since in your seats my wearied steps have found
Their first repose, not inauspicious smile
On Phœbus and on me! For know, the god
Who 'gainst unhappy Œdipus denounced
Unnumbered woes, foretold that here at last
I should have rest, within this hallowed grove
These hospitable shades, and finish here
A life of misery: happy those, he said,
Who should receive me, glorious their reward,
And woe to them who strove to drive me hence
Inhuman. This he promised to confirm
By signs undoubted; thunder, or the sound
Of dreadful earthquake, or the lightning's blast
Launched from the arm of Jove. I doubt it not,
From you some happy omen hither led
My prosperous steps, that first to you I came
Pure to the pure; and here on this rude seat
Reposed me, could not be the work of chance;
Wherefore, ye powers! as Phœbus hath decreed,
Here let me find a period of my woes,
Here end my wretched life! unless the man,
Who long hath groaned beneath the bitterest ills
That mortals feel, still seem to merit more.
Daughters of Ancient Night! oh, hear me now!
And thou, from great Minerva called, the best
And noblest city, Athens! pity me,
Pity the shadow of poor Œdipus;
For, oh! I am not what I was.
Ant. No more:
Behold a venerable band approach
Of ancient natives, come perchance to seek thee.
Œdi. I've done; Antigone, remove me hence,

And hide me in the grove till by their words,
Listening, I learn their purpose; such foreknowledge
Will best direct us how to act hereafter. [*Exeunt.*

Scene IV.

Chor. Where is he? Look, examine, search around
For this abandoned exile, of mankind
The most profane; doubtless some wretched stranger.
Who else had dared on this forbidden soil
To tread, where dwell the dreadful deities
We tremble e'en to name, and as we pass
Dare not behold, but silently revere,
Or soft with words of fairest omen greet?
Of these regardless, here we come to find
An impious wretch. I look around the grove,
But still he lurks unseen.

Scene V.

Œdipus, Antigone, Chorus.

Œdi. Behold me here;
For by your words I find you look for me.
Chor. [*looking steadfastly at him*]. Dreadful his voice and terrible his aspect!
Œdi. I am no outlaw; do not look thus on me.
Chor. Jove the defender! who is this old man?
Œdi. One on whom fortune little hath bestowed
To call for reverence from you; that, alas!
Is but too plain; thus by another's eyes
Conducted here, and on her aid depending,
Old as I am.
Chor. Alas! and wert thou born
Thus sightless? Full of sorrow and of years
Indeed thou seemst; but do not let on us
Thy curse devolve. Thou hast transgressed the bounds
Prescribed to mortals; shun this hallowed grove,

Where on the grassy surface to the powers
A welcome offering flows with honey mixed
The limpid stream; unhappy stranger, hence,
Away, begone! Thou seest 'tis a long space
Divides us: dost thou hear me, wretched exile?
This instant, if thou dost, depart, then speak,
But not before.

ŒDI. Antigone, my daughter,
What's to be done?

ANT. Obey the citizens;
Give me thy hand.

ŒDI. I will; and now, my friends,
Confiding thus in you, and thus removing
As you directed, let me not be injured.

CHOR. Thou shalt not; be assured that thou art safe;
None shall offend or drive thee hence.

ŒDI. Yet more
Must I approach?

CHOR. A little farther still.

ŒDI. Will this suffice?

CHOR. Remove him this way, virgin;
Thou hearst us.

ANT. Thou must follow me, my father,
Weak as thou art; we are unhappy strangers,
And must submit; whate'er the city hates
Content to hate, and what she loves to love.

ŒDI. Lead me, my daughter, to some hallowed spot
For mutual converse fit, nor let us strive
With dire necessity.

CHOR. Stop there, nor move
Beyond that stone.

[ŒDI.] Thus, then?

CHOR. It is enough.

ŒDI. Where should I sit?

CHOR. A little forward lean,
And rest thee there.

ANT. [*taking hold of him*]. Alas! 'tis my sad office—
Let me perform it—to direct thy steps;
To this loved hand commit thy aged limbs;
I will be careful. [*She seats him on the stone.*

ŒDI. O unhappy State!

CHOR. Now, wretched stranger, tell us who thou art,
Thy country, and thy name.
ŒDI. Alas! my lords,
A poor abandoned exile; but, oh! do not——
CHOR. What sayst thou?
ŒDI. Do not ask me who I am;
Inquire no farther.
CHOR. Wherefore?
ŒDI. My sad race——
CHOR. Speak on.
ŒDI. [*turning to* ANTIGONE]. My daughter, how shall I proceed?
CHOR. Thy race, thy father——
ŒDI. O Antigone!
What do I suffer?
ANT. Speak; thou canst not be
More wretched than thou art.
ŒDI. I will; for, oh!
It cannot be concealed.
CHOR. You do delay;
Inform us straight.
ŒDI. Know you the son of Laius?
CHOR. Alas!
ŒDI. The race of Labdacus.
CHOR. O Jove!
ŒDI. Th' unhappy Œdipus.
CHOR. And art thou he?
ŒDI. Be not affrighted at my words.
CHOR. O Heaven!
ŒDI. Wretch that I am! what will become of me?
CHOR. Away, begone, fly from this place!
ŒDI. Then where
Are all your promises? are they forgotten?
CHOR. Justice divine will never punish those
Who but repay the injury they receive;
And fraud doth merit fraud for its reward.
Wherefore, begone, and leave us, lest once more
Our city be compelled to force thee hence.
ANT. O my kind friends! as you revere the name
Of virtue, though you will not hear the prayers
Of my unhappy father, worn with age

And laden with involuntary crimes;
Yet hear the daughter pleading for her sire,
And pity her who with no evil eye
Beholds you, but, as one of the same race,
Born of one common father, here entreats
Your mercy to th' unhappy, for on you,
As on some god alone, we must rely;
Then grant this wished-for boon—oh! grant it now,
By all that's dear to thee, thy sacred word,
Thy interest, thy children, and thy god;
'Tis not in mortals to avoid the crime
Which Heaven hath pre-ordained.

CHOR. We pity thee,
Daughter of Œdipus; we pity him,
And his misfortunes; but of wrath divine
Still fearful, dare not alter our decree.

ŒDI. Now who shall trust to glory and fair fame?
What shall it profit that your pious city
Was once for hospitable rites renowned,
That she alone would pity and relieve
The afflicted stranger? Is she so to me
Who drives me hence, and trembles at a name?
Me you can never fear, and for my crimes
I am the sufferer, not the offender. What
Touching my father I have spoke, alas!
If 'tis for that you do abhor me thus,
Was I to blame? The injury received
I but repaid, and therefore had I known
The crime I acted, I were guiltless still.
Whither I came, I came unknowingly;
Not so they acted who have banished me.
By your commands already here removed,
Oh! by the gods, preserve, assist me now;
If you revere them, do not thus despise
What they decree; their eyes behold the good
And view the evil man, nor shall the wicked
Escape their wrath; use not their sacred names
To cover crimes and stain the fame of Athens.
As you received the suppliant, oh! remember
Your plighted faith—preserve me, save me now!
Look not contemptuous on this wretched form,

Or cast reproach unmerited; I come
Nor impious, nor profane, and with me bring
To Athens much of profit and renown,
As when your king arrives, you all shall know:
Meantime despise me not.

CHOR. Old man, thy words
Are full of weight, and merit our observance;
If those who here preside but know thy purpose,
It doth suffice.

ŒDI. But say, where is the king?

CHOR. Within his palace, but a messenger
Is gone to fetch him hither.

ŒDI. O my friends!
Think you a sightless wretch like me will move
His pity or his care, that he will come?

CHOR. Most readily, when he shall hear the name
Of Œdipus.

ŒDI. And who shall tell it him?

CHOR. The journey's long, but passing travellers
Will catch the tale, and he must hear it soon;
Fear not, thy story is already known
On every side; 'twill quicken his slow steps,
And bring him instant hither.

ŒDI. May he come
In happy hour to Athens and to me!
He will; what good man doth not love his country?

ANT. O Jove! what shall I say or think? My father——

ŒDI. What says my daughter?

ANT. This way bent, behold
On a Sicilian steed, a woman comes,
Her face concealed by a Thessalian veil,
To shield her from the sun: am I deceived,
Or is it she? I know not what to think.
It is my sister, now she smiles upon me;
It must, it can be none but my Ismene.

ŒDI. Who, my Antigone?

ANT. It is thy daughter,
My sister, but her voice will soon convince you.

Scene VI.

Ismene and Attendant, Œdipus, Antigone, Chorus.

Ism. O the sweet sounds! a father and a sister!
What pains have I not suffered in the search!
And now for grief can scarce behold you.
Œdi. Oh!
My daughter, art thou here?
Ism. Alas! my father,
How terribly thou lookst!
Œdi. From the same blood
The father and the daughter.
Ism. Wretched race!
Œdi. And art thou come, my daughter?
Ism. I have reached thee
With toil and labour.
Œdi. Touch me, O my child!
Ism. Let me embrace you both.
Œdi. Both miserable!
Ism. Join then a third as wretched as yourselves.
[*They all embrace.*
Œdi. Ismene, wherefore art thou come?
Ism. My care
For thee, my father, brought me here.
Œdi. For me!
Ism. That I might speak to thee; this faithful slave
Alone conducted me. [*Pointing to her* Attendant.
Œdi. Thy brothers, say,
What are they doing?
Ism. They are—what they are;
For, oh! between them deadliest discord reigns.
Œdi. How like th' unmanly sons of Egypt's clime,
Where the men sit inglorious at the loom,
And to their wives leave each domestic care!
E'en thus my sons, who should have laboured for me,
Like women idly sit at home, whilst you
Perform their office, and with filial care
Attend a wretched father. This kind maid,
[*pointing to* Antigone
E'en from her infant days, hath wandered long

An exile with me, and supported still
My feeble age; oft through the savage woods,
Naked and hungry, by the wintry storms
Or scorching heats afflicted, led me on,
And gave me food, unmindful of her own.
Thou too, Ismene, wert my faithful guard
When I was driven forth; and now art come
To tell thy father what the gods declare;
A stranger now to Thebes, I know not what
Hath passed between them; thou hast some sad news,
I know thou hast, to tell thy wretched father.

ISM. What I have suffered in the search of thee
I pass in silence o'er, since to repeat
Were but, alas! to double my misfortunes;
I only came to tell thee the sad fate
Of thy unhappy sons. Awhile they seemed
As if they meant to yield the throne to Creon,
Nor stain their guilty hands with Theban blood,
Mindful of that pollution which remained
On thy devoted race; but now some god
Or their own wicked minds have raised a flame
Of dire contention, which shall gain the power
Supreme, and reign in Thebes. Eteocles
Hath drove his elder Polynices forth,
Who, now an exile, seeks (as fame reports)
The Argians, and in solemn contract joined
With these his new allies would raise their fame
Above the stars, and sink our Thebes in ruin.
These are not words alone—'tis now in act,
Alas! e'en now I fear, nor know I when
The gods will take compassion on thy woes.

ŒDI. Hast thou no hope they'll pity me?

ISM. I have;
Their oracles have said it.

ŒDI. Ha! said what?
My daughter, tell me, what have they declared?

ISM. The time would come, they said, when Thebes once more
Must seek thee, dead or living, for her safety.

ŒDI. Why, what could such a wretch as I do for them?

ISM. Their only hope, they say, is placed in thee.
ŒDI. I, that am nothing, grown so powerful! Whence
Can it proceed?
ISM. The gods, who once depressed thee,
Now raise thee up again.
ŒDI. It cannot be;
Who falls in youth will never rise in age.
ISM. Know, for this very purpose Creon comes;
Ere long thou mayst expect him.
ŒDI. What to do,
My daughter?
ISM. To remove thee hence, and place thee
Nearer to Thebes, but not within her borders.
ŒDI. If not within, what profit can it be
To them?
ISM. Thy tomb, raised in a foreign land,
They fear would prove most fatal.
ŒDI. But how know they
It must be so, unless some god declared it?
ISM. For this alone they wish to have thee near
The borders, in their power, and not thy own.
ŒDI. To bury me at Thebes?
ISM. That cannot be;
Thy crime forbids it.
ŒDI. Then I'll never go.
ISM. A time will come when they shall feel thy vengeance.
ŒDI. What strange vicissitude can e'er produce
This wished event?
ISM. Thy wrath, when at thy tomb
They shall be forced to meet.
ŒDI. Who told thee this?
Ismene, say.
ISM. The sacred ministers
Of Delphos.
ŒDI. Came it from Apollo's shrine?
ISM. On their return to Thebes they did report it.
ŒDI. My sons, did they hear aught of this?
ISM. Both heard,
And know it well.
ŒDI. Yet, impious as they are,
Preferred a kingdom to their father's love.

ISM. With grief I tell thee what with grief I heard.
ŒDI. Oh! may the gods doom them to endless strife;
Ne'er may the battle cease till Œdipus
Himself shall end it; then, nor he who bears
The sceptre now, should long maintain the throne,
Nor Polynices e'er to Thebes return;
They should not live who drove a parent forth
To misery and exile, left by those
Who should have loved, supported, and revered him;
I know they say the city but complied
With my request—I asked for banishment;
Not then I asked it. In my desperate mind,
When first I raged, I wished indeed for death;
It had been grateful then, but no kind friend
Would minister the boon. At length my grief
Gave way, and when they saw my troubled soul
Had taken ample vengeance on itself,
After long stay, the city drove me forth;
And those who could have saved me, my base sons,
Deaf to a father's prayers, permit me still
To roam abroad in poverty and exile.
From these alone, far as their tender sex
Can help me, I receive the means of life,
All the sweet comfort, food, or needful rest
Earth can afford me now, whilst to my sons
A throne was dearer than a father's love;
But they shall never gain me for their friend,
Ne'er reign in Thebes—these oracles declare
They never shall. I do remember too
Another prophecy which Phœbus erst
Delivered to me: let 'em send their Creon,
Or any other powerful citizen,
To drag me hence; my hospitable friends,
If to those all-protecting deities
Who here preside you too will lend your aid,
Athens shall find in me its best defence,
And vengeance strike the foes of Œdipus.
CHOR. Thou and thy daughters well deserve our pity
And, for thy words are full of promised good
To our loved city, I will tell thee all
'Tis meet thou shouldst perform.

ŒDI. My best of friends,
Instruct me; I am ready to obey.
CHOR. An expiation instant must thou make
To the offended powers whose sacred seat
Thou has profaned.
ŒDI. But how must it be done?
CHOR. First, with pure hands, from th' over-flowing spring,
Thy due libations pour.
ŒDI. What follows then?
CHOR. Take thou a cup wrought by some skilful hand,
Bind it with wreaths around.
ŒDI. Of leaves or threads
Composed?
CHOR. Of wool, fresh from the new shorn lamb.
ŒDI. Is there aught else?
CHOR. Then, turning to the sun,
Make thy libations.
ŒDI. From the cup, thou sayst,
CHOR. The water from three fountains drawn; and last
Remember, none be left.
ŒDI. With that alone
Must it be filled?
CHOR. Water with honey mixed—
No wine; this pour on th' earth——
ŒDI. What then remains?
CHOR. Take in thy hand of olive-boughs thrice nine,
And offering these, begin thy humble prayer.
ŒDI. But how address them? That concerns me near.
CHOR. Their name thou knowst implies benevolent:
Intreat them therefore kindly now to prove
Benevolent to thee; but, remember,
Low be the voice and short the supplication.
That done, return—be careful to perform it;
I may assist thee then with confidence,
But if thou dost it not, must tremble for thee.
ŒDI. My daughters, heard you this?
ANT. We did; command
What's to be done.
ŒDI. What I can never do,

Powerless and blind as I am; one of you,
My daughters, must perform it.
ANT. One alone
May do the task of many when the mind
Is active in it.
ŒDI. Hence then, quick, away!
But do not leave me here alone. These limbs
Without a guide will never find their way.
ISM. Father, I go; but how to find the place
I know not.
CHOR. Stranger, t' other side of the grove;
There, some inhabitant will soon inform thee,
If thou shouldst want assistance or instruction.
ISM. Meantime, Antigone, remain thou here,
And guard our father well: cares are not cares
When we endure them for a parent's sake.
[*Exit* ISMENE.

SCENE VII.

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

CHOR. Stranger, albeit we know 'tis most ungrateful
To raise the sad remembrance of past woes,
Yet would we gladly hear——
ŒDI. What wouldst thou know?
CHOR. The cause of thy unhappy state.
ŒDI. Alas!
By all the sacred hospitable rites,
I beg thee do not ask me to reveal it;
My crimes are horrible.
CHOR. Already fame
Hath spread them wide, and still talks loudly of them;
Tell us the truth.
ŒDI. Alas!
CHOR. Let me beseech thee!
ŒDI. O me
CHOR. Comply: ask what thou wilt of me,
And thou shalt have it.
ŒDI. I have suffered much;

The gods can witness 'twas against my will;
I knew not of it.
CHOR. Knew not what?
ŒDI. The city,
Unknowing too, bound me in horrid nuptials.
CHOR. And didst thou then pollute, as fame reports,
Thy mother's bed?
ŒDI. Oh! death to hear: I did.
Here, here they are.
CHOR. Who 's there?
ŒDI. My crimes! my daughters!
CHOR. Daughters and sisters of their father? Oh!
'Tis horrible indeed!
ŒDI. 'Tis woe on woe.
CHOR. Great Jove! both daughters of one hapless mother!
What hast thou suffered?
ŒDI. Ills not to be borne.
CHOR. Didst thou then perpetrate the horrid deed?
ŒDI. Oh no!
CHOR. Not do it?
ŒDI. I received from Thebes
A fatal gift; would I had never ta'en it!
CHOR. And art thou not a murderer too?
ŒDI. What's that
Thou sayst?
CHOR. Thy father——
ŒDI. Thou add'st grief to grief.
CHOR. Didst thou not murder him?
ŒDI. I did; but hear——
CHOR. Hear what?
ŒDI. The cause.
CHOR. What cause?
ŒDI. I'll tell thee. Know then,
I murdered others too, yet by the laws
I stand absolved; 'twas done in ignorance.
CHOR. [*seeing* THESEUS, *who enters*]. But lo! the king,
Ægean Theseus, comes;
The fame of thee hath brought him here already.

Scene VIII.

Theseus, Œdipus, Antigone, Chorus.

The. O son of Laius! long ere this the tale
Of thy disastrous fate, by many a tongue
Related, I had heard: thy eyes torn forth
By thy own desperate hand: and now I see
It was too true. Thy garb and dreadful aspect
Speak who thou art. Unhappy Œdipus,
I come to ask, in pity to thy woes,
What 's thy request to Athens or to me—
Thine, or this hapless virgin on thy steps
Attendant. Speak; for large must be the boon
I would refuse thee. I have known too well,
Myself a wretched wanderer, the woes
Of cruel exile, not to pity thine:
Of toils and dangers in a foreign land
Much have I suffered; therefore not to me
Shall the poor stranger ever sue in vain
For aid and safety. Mortals as we are,
Uncertain ever is to-morrow's fate,
Alike unknown to Theseus and to thee.

Œdi. Theseus, thy words declare thy noble nature,
And leave me little to reply. Thou knowst
My story—who and whence I am; no more
Remains, but that I tell thee my request,
And we have done.

The. Proceed then, and inform me

Œdi. I come to give this wretched body to thee,
To sight ungracious, but of worth more dear
To thee than fairest forms could boast.

The. What worhth?

Œdi. Hereafter thou shalt know—not now

The. But when
Shall we receive it?

Œdi. When I am no more
When thou shalt bury me.

THE. Death is, it seems,
Thy chief concern, and life not worth thy care.
ŒDI. That will procure me all the means of life.
THE. And is this all thou ask'st, this little boon?
ŒDI. Not little is the strife which shall ensue.
THE. What strife? With whom—thy children, or my own?
ŒDI. Mine, Theseus; they would have me back to Thebes.
THE. And wouldst thou rather be an exile here?
ŒDI. Once they refused me.
THE. Anger suits but ill
With low estate and miseries like thine.
ŒDI. Hear first, and then condemn me.
THE. Not unheard
All thou canst urge, would I reprove thee. Speak.
ŒDI. O Theseus! I have borne the worst of ills.
THE. The curses on thy race?
ŒDI. Oh no! all Greece
Hath heard of them.
THE. What more than mortal woe
Afflicts thee then?
ŒDI. E'en this: my cruel sons
Have driven me from my country; nevermore
Must Thebes receive a parricide.
THE. Why then
Recall thee now, if thou must ne'er return?
ŒDI. Commanded by an oracle divine.
THE. Why, what doth it declare?
ŒDI. That Thebes shall yield
To thee, and to thy arms.
THE. But whence should spring
Such dire contention?
ŒDI. Dearest son of Ægeus,
From age and death exempt, the gods alone
Immortal and unchangeable remain,
Whilst all things else fall by the hand of Time,
The universal conqueror. Earth laments
Her fertile powers exhausted. Human strength
Is withered soon. E'en faith and truth decay,

And from their ashes fraud and falsehood rise.
Nor friendship long from man to man endures,
Or realm to realm. To each successive rise
Bitter and sweet, and happiness and woe.
Athens and Thebes thou seest united now,
And all is well; but passing time shall bring
The fatal day (and slight will be the cause)
That soon shall change the bonds of amity
And holy faith, for feuds and deadliest hate.
Then, buried long in earth, shall this cold corse
Drink their warm blood, which from the mutual wound
Frequent shall flow. It must be as I tell thee,
If Jove be Jove, and great Apollo true.
But why should I reveal the fixed decree
Of all-deciding Heaven? Permit me now
To end where I began. Thy plighted faith
Once more confirm, and never shalt thou say
The wretched Œdipus to Theseus came
An useless and unprofitable guest,
If the immortal gods have not deceived me.

CHOR. O king! already hath this man declared
The same goodwill to thee and to our country.

THES. Can I reject benevolence and love
Like this, my friends? Oh no! the common rites
Of hospitality, this altar here,
The witness of our mutual vows, forbid it;
He comes a suppliant to the goddesses,
And pays no little tribute both to me
And to my kingdom; he shall find a seat
Within my realms, for I revere his virtues.
If here it pleaseth him to stay, remember [*to the* CHORUS
'Tis my command you guard this stranger well;
If thou wouldst rather go with me, thou mayst;
I leave it to thy choice. [*To* ŒDIPUS.

ŒDI. Reward them, Jove.

THE. What sayst thou? wilt thou follow me?

ŒDI. I would,
If it were lawful, but it must be here—
This is the place——

THE. For what? I'll not deny thee——

ŒDI. Where I must conquer those who banished me.
THE. That would be glory and renown to this
Thy place of refuge.
ŒDI. If I may depend
On thy fair promise.
THE. Fear not, I shall ne'er
Betray my friend.
ŒDI. I will not bind thee to it
By oath, like those whom we suspect of ill.
THE. Thou needst not, Œdipus; my word 's my oath.
ŒDI. How must I act then?
THE. Fear'st thou aught?
ŒDI. I do.
A force will come against me.
THE. [*pointing to the* CHORUS]. Here 's thy guard;
These shall protect thee.
ŒDI. If thou goest, remember
And save me, Theseus.
THE. Teach not me my duty.
ŒDI. Still am I fearful.
THE. Theseus is not so.
ŒDI. Knowest thou not what they threatened?
THE. This I know,
No power on earth shall wrest thee from this place.
Oftimes the angry soul will vent its wrath
In idle threats, with high and empty words,
Which ever, as the mind is to itself
Restored, are—nothing. They may boast their strength,
And say they'll tear thee from me; but I tell thee
The journey would be long and tedious to them;
They will not hazard it—they dare not: therefore
Be comforted, for if by Phœbus sent
Thou hither cam'st, thou'rt safe without my aid,
E'en if I leave thee safe; for know, the name
Of Theseus here sufficeth to protect thee.

[*Exit* THESEUS.

Scene IX.

Œdipus, Antigone, Chorus

Chorus.

Strophe 1.

Thou art come in happy time,
Stranger, to this blissful clime,
Long for swiftest steeds renowned,
Fertilest of the regions round;
Where, beneath the ivy shade,
In the dew-sprinkled glade,
Many a love-lorn nightingale
Warbles sweet her plaintive tale;
Where the vine in clusters pours
Her sweets, secured from wintry showers
Nor scorching suns, nor raging storm
The beauties of the year deform.

Antistrophe 1.

Where the sweet narcissus growing,
Where the yellow crocus blowing,
Round the sacred altars twine,
Offering to the powers divine;
Where the pure springs perpetual flow,
Watering the verdant meads below,
Which with its earth-enriching waves
The fair Cephisus ever laves;
Where, with his ever-sporting train,
Bacchus wantons on the plain,
Pleased with the Muses still to rove,
And golden Venus, queen of love.

Strophe 2.

Alone within this happy land,
Planted here by Nature's hand,
Which, nor Asia's fertile plains,
Nor Pelops' spacious isle contains,

Pallas, thy sacred olive grows,
Striking terror on our foes;
Ever free from hostile rage,
From wanton youth or greedy age;
Happy in sage Minerva's love,
And guarded still by Morian Jove.

Antistrophe 2.

But nobler gifts and fairer fame,
Athens, yet adorn thy name;
Such wondrous gifts hath poured on thee,
Thy great protecting deity.
Here first obedient to command,
Formed by Neptune's skilful hand,
The steed was taught to know the rein,
And bear the chariot o'er the plain,
Here first along the rapid tide
The stately vessels learned to ride,
And swifter down the currents flow
Than Nereids cut the waves below. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

ANTIGONE, ŒDIPUS, CHORUS.

ANTIGONE. Great are thy praises, Attica, and now
The time is come to show thou dost deserve them.
ŒDI. What means my daughter? Speak; what new event
Alarms thee?
ANT. Creon, with a numerous band
Of followers, comes this way.
ŒDI. Oh! now, my friends,
If ever, help me.
CHOR. Fear not; we'll protect thee.
Though I am old, the strength of Attica
Is not decayed.

Scene II.

Creon (*with Attendants*), Œdipus, Antigone, Chorus.

Creon. Most honoured citizens,
I see you look with eyes of fear upon me,
Without a cause; for know, I came not here
Intending aught of violence or ill
Against a city so renowned in Greece
As yours hath ever been; I only came,
Commissioned by the State of Thebes, to fetch
This old man back, if by persuasion mild
I could induce him to return; not sent
By one alone, but the united voice
Of a whole people, who assigned the task
To me because, by blood united to him,
I felt for his misfortunes as my own.
Come therefore, Œdipus, attend me home;
Thebes calls thee back, thy kingdom now demands thee—
By me she calls thee; listen to thy friend,
For surely Creon were the worst of men,
If he could look on woes like thine unmoved
When I behold thee, in a foreign land
A wretched wanderer, forced to beg thy bread
From place to place, with this unhappy maid,
Whom little did I think to see exposed
To misery and shame, of nuptial rites
Hopeless, and thus bereft of every aid,—
Oh! 'tis reproach and infamy to us
And to our race; but 'tis already known,
And cannot be concealed. O Œdipus!
I here beseech thee, by our country's gods,
Return to Thebes; bid thou a kind farewell—
For she deserves it—to this noble city,
But still remember thy own dearer country.

Œdi. Thou daring hypocrite, whose specious wiles
Beneath fair semblance mean but to betray,
Why wouldst thou tempt me thus? Why thus once more

Ensnare me in thy toils, and make me still
More wretched than I am? Long time oppressed
By heaviest woes, I pined within my palace,
And longed for exile; but you then refused
To let me go, till, satiated with grief,
My soul at length was calm, and much I wished
To spend my few remaining years at home:
Then thou—for little did the kindred blood
Thou talkst of then avail—didst banish me;
And now again thou com'st to make me wretched.
Because thou seest this kind benignant city
Embrace and cherish, thou wouldst drag me hence,
With sweetest words covering thy bitter mind,
Professing love to those who choose it not.
He who denies his charitable aid
To the poor beggar in his utmost need,
And if abundance comes, should offer that
Which is not wanted, little merits thanks.
Such is thy bounty now—in word alone,
And not in deed, the friend of Œdipus.
But I will tell them what thou art. Thou cam'st not
To take me hence, but leave me in the borders
Of Thebes, that so thy kingdom may escape
The impending ills which this avenging city
Shall pour upon it; but 'twill come to pass
As I foretold: my evil genius still
Shall haunt yon, and my sons no more of Thebes
Inherit than shall serve them for a grave.
Thy country's fate is better known to me
Than to thyself, for my instruction comes
From surer guides—from Phœbus and from Jove.
Thy artful speech shall little serve thy purpose,
'Twill only hurt thy cause: therefore begone!
I'm not to be persuaded. Let me live
In quiet here, for, wretched as I am,
'Twill be some comfort to be far from thee.

CREON. Thinkst thou I heed thy words? Who'll suffer most
For this perverseness—thou, or I?

ŒDI. Thy little arts will nought avail with me,
Or with my friends.

CREON. Poor wretch! no time can cure
Thy follies; thy old age is grown delirious.

ŒDI. Thou hast a hateful tongue; but few, how just
Soe'er they be, can always speak aright.

CREON. But to say much, and to say well, are things
Which differ widely.

ŒDI. What thou sayst no doubt
Is brief, and proper too.

CREON. 'Twill hardly seem so
To those who think like thee.

ŒDI. Away; nor dare
Direct my steps, as if thou hadst the power
To place me where thou wilt.

CREON. Remember all
To witness this, for he shall answer it
When he is mine.

ŒDI. But who shall force me hence
Against the will of these my friends?

CRE. Their aid
Is vain, already I have done what much
Will hurt thee.

ŒDI. Ha! what threats are these?

CREON. Thy daughters
Must go with me; one is secured, and now
This moment will I wrest the other from thee.

ŒDI. O me!

CREON. I'll give thee much more cause for grief.

ŒDI. Hast thou my daughter?

CREON. Ay, and will have this.

ŒDI. [*to the* CHORUS]. What will you do, my friends?
Will you forsake me?
Will you not drive this vile, abandoned man
Forth from your city?

CHOR. Stranger, hence, away!
Thy actions are most shameful and unjust.

CREON. Slaves, do your office; bear her off by force,
If she consents not.

ANT. Whither shall I fly
For aid? What god or man shall I implore
To succour me?

CHOR. Alas! what wouldst thou do?

CREON. I touch not him, but I must have my own.
ANT. O princes! aid me now.
CHOR. 'Tis most unjust.
CREON. I say 'tis just.
CHOR. Then prove it.
CREON. They are mine.
CHOR. O citizens!
ANT. Oh! loose me: if you do not,
You shall repent this violence.
CREON. Go on,
I will defend you.
ŒDI. He, who injures me,
Offends the city.
CHOR. Said I not before
It would be thus?
CREON. [*to the* CHORUS]. Let go the maid this instant.
CHOR. Command where thou hast power.
CREON. Let her go.
CHOR. Begone thyself. What, ho! my countrymen,
The city is in danger; haste and save us.
[CREON'S *followers seize on* ANTIGONE.
ANT. I'm seized, my friends. Oh, help!
ŒDI. Where is my daughter?
ANT. Torn from thee.
ŒDI Oh! stretch forth thy hand.
ANT. I cannot.
CREON. Away with her
ŒDI. O wretched Œdipus!
CREON. No longer shall these tender props support
Thy feeble age; since thou art still resolved
Against thyself, thy country, and thy friends,
By whose command I come, remain perverse
And obstinate, old man; but know, hereafter
Time will convince thee thou hast ever been
Thy own worst foe; thy fiery temper still
Must make thee wretched.
CHOR. Stranger, stir not hence.
CREON. I charge you, touch me not.
CHOR. Thou shalt not go
Till thou restor'st the virgins.
CREON. I must have

A nobler ransom from your city; these
Shall not suffice.

CHOR. What meanst thou?

CREON. He shall go,
This Œdipus.

CHOR. Thy threats are terrible.

CREON. I'll do 't; and only he who governs here
Shall hinder me.

ŒDI. O insolence! thou wilt not,
Thou dar'st not force me.

CREON. Hold thy peace.

ŒDI. Not e'en
The dreadful goddesses, who here preside,
Should bind my tongue from heaviest curses on thee,
For thou hast robbed me of the only light
These eyes could boast; but may th' all-seeing sun
Behold and punish thee and all thy race,
And load thy age with miseries like mine!

CREON. Inhabitants of Athens, hear ye this?

ŒDI. They do, and see that but with fruitless words
I can repay the injuries I receive;
For I am weak with age, and here alone.

CREON. No longer will I curb my just resentment,
But force thee hence.

ŒDI. O me!

CHOR. What boldness, stranger,
Could make thee hope to do a deed like this
Unpunished?

CREON. 'Tis resolved.

CHOR. Our Athens then
Is fallen indeed, and is no more a city.

CREON. In a just cause the weak may foil the mighty.

ŒDI. Hear how he threatens——

CHOR. What he'll ne'er perform.

CREON. That Jove alone can tell.

CHOR. Shall injuries
Like these be suffered?

CREON. Call it injury
Thou mayst, 'tis such as thou perforce must bear.

CHOR. This is too much; ye rulers of the land
My fellow-citizens, come forth and save us.

Scene III.

Theseus, Creon, Œdipus, Antigone, Chorus.

The. Whence is this clamour? Wherefore am I called
From sacred rites at Neptune's altar paid,
Our guardian god? Say, what's the cause that thus
In haste I'm summoned hither?

Œdi. O my friend!—
For well I know thy voice—most cruelly
Have I been treated by this man.

The. Who did it?

Œdi. This Creon, whom thou seest, hath ravished from me
My only help, my daughters.

The. Ha! what sayst thou?

Œdi. 'Tis as I tell thee.

The. [*to his Attendants*]. Quick, dispatch my servants,
Fly to the altar, summon all my people,
Horsemen and foot; give o'er the sacrifice,
And instant to the double gate repair,
Lest with the virgins the base ravishers
Escape unpunished, and my guest thus injured
Laugh me to scorn for cowardice. Away!
Were I to punish this oppressor here [*turning to* Creon
As my resentment bids and he deserves,
He should this instant fall beneath my rage;
But the same justice he to others deals,
Himself shall meet from us; thou shalt not go
Till those whom thou didst basely ravish hence
Are brought before me. 'Twas unlike thyself,
Unworthy of thy country and thy race,
To enter thus a cultivated city,
Where law and justice reign, with violence
And rapine, snatching what thy fancy pleased.
Or didst thou think I ruled a desert land,
Or that my people were a race of slaves,
And Theseus but the shadow of a king?
Thebes never taught thee such destructive lessons,

For she abhors injustice : when she hears
That Creon, thus despising sacred laws,
Hath ta'en with brutal violence my right,
And would have stolen a wretched suppliant from me,
She'll not approve thy conduct ; say I went
To Thebes, how just soever were the cause,
I should not seize on aught without the leave
Of him who governed there ; but, as becomes
A stranger, bear myself unblamed by all.
Thou hast disgraced thy country and thy friends,
And weight of years hath ta'en thy senses from thee.
Again I say, restore the virgins to me,
Or stay with me thyself, for so thou shalt,
Howe'er unwilling ; what I've said, remember,
Is what I have resolved—therefore determine.

CHOR. [*to* CREON]. Stranger, thy actions, noble as thou art,
But ill become thy family and name,
Because unjust ; but thou beholdst thy fate.

CREON. Theseus, it was not that I thought this city
Without or guards to save, or laws to rule,
Which brought me here, nor unadvised I came ;
But that I hoped you never would receive
My kindred here against my will, nor e'er
Embrace a vile incestuous parricide,
Or cherish and protect him in a land
Whose court, renowned for justice, suffers not
Such poor abandoned exiles to reside
Within its borders ; therefore did I this,
Which yet I had not done but for the curses
Which he hath poured on me and all my race ;
Revenge inspired me ; anger, well thou knowst,
Can never be extinguished but by death,
Which closeth every wound. At present, Theseus,
It must be as thou wilt ; my want of power,
How just soe'er my cause, demands submission ;
Yet, old and weak, I shall not tamely yield.

ŒDI. Audacious man ! thinkst thou the vile reproach
Thou utter'st falls on me, or on thyself ?
Thou who upbraidst me thus for all my woes,
Murder and incest, which against my will

I had committed, so it pleased the gods,
Offended at my race for former crimes;
But I am guiltless; canst thou name a fault
Deserving this? For, tell me, was it mine,
When to my father Phœbus did declare
That he should one day perish by the hand
Of his own child? Was Œdipus to blame,
Who had no being then? If, born at length
To wretchedness, he met his sire unknown,
And slew him, that involuntary deed
Canst thou condemn? And for my fatal marriage,
Dost thou not blush to name it? Was not she
Thy sister, she who bore me, ignorant
And guiltless woman, afterwards my wife,
And mother to my children? What she did,
She did unknowing; not like thee, who thus
Dost purposely upbraid us both. Heaven knows
Unwillingly I wedded her, and now
Unwillingly repeat the dreadful tale;
But, nor for that, nor for my murdered father,
Have I deserved thy bitter taunts; for tell me,
Thy life attacked, wouldst thou have stayed to ask
Th' assassin if he were thy father? No;
Self-love would urge thee to revenge the insult.
Thus was I drove to ill by th' angry gods;
This, should my father's soul revisit earth,
Himself would own, and pity Œdipus.
Thy bold and impious tongue still utters all;
Just or unjust, thou pourst thy foul reproach
On me, pretending to revere the name
Of Theseus and his country. But remember,
The city, whom thou hast praised, is famed
For piety and reverence to the gods;
Yet wouldst thou drive a needy suppliant thence,
And lead him captive. Thou hast stolen my daughter;
But I implore the dreadful goddesses
To grant me aid, that thou mayst feel the power
Which thou contemn'st, and know the force of Athens.

Chor. [*to* Theseus]. O king! this stranger merits thy regard;
His woes are great, his cause should be defended.

THE. No more the ravishers are fled with speed,
Whilst we, who suffer, stand inactive here.
CREON. Speak thy commands, for I must yield to thee.
THE. Go thou before me, I shall follow close;
If here thou hast concealed the virgins, now
Discover them; if hence, to others' hands
Committed, they are fled, they shall not 'scape;
My servants soon will fetch them back. Meantime,
Remember thy condition, for thy fate
Hath caught thee in the net which thou hadst spread
For others; but what evil means acquire
Is seldom kept: thou cam'st not naked here,
Or unattended, thus to do an act
Of violence. Ere long I'll know on what
Thou didst rely, nor by a single arm
Shall Athens fall inglorious. Hearst thou this,
Or are my words unheeded?
CREON. 'Tis not now
A time to answer; we shall know at home
What must be done.
THE. Thou threatenest; but go on.
Stay thou in quiet here, for if I live,
[*turning to* ŒDIPUS
I will not rest till I restore thy daughters.
[*Exeunt* THESEUS *and* CREON.

SCENE IV.

ŒDIPUS, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Strophe I.

Now the combatants prepare,
And hasten to the field of war,
Theseus, their great and god-like friend,
The hapless virgins shall defend.
Oh! could I hear the dreadful battle roar,
Or near Apollo's sacred shrine,

Or on the torch-enlightened shore,
Or Ceres, where thy priests their rights divine
Perform, with lips in solemn silence sealed,
And mysteries ne'er by mortal tongue revealed.

Antistrophe 1.

At yon snowy mountain's feet
Westward perchance the warriors meet;
Chariot and horse with mutual rage
On Œta's flowery plains engage;
Around their Theseus now, a valiant band,
See Athens' martial sons unite
To save their native land;
All shake their glittering spears, and urge the fight;
All who thy power, Equestrian Pallas, own,
Or bow to Neptune, Rhea's honoured son.

Strophe 2.

The bloody scene shall soon be o'er
Creon the virgin shall restore;
My soul prophetic sees the maid
For pious duty thus repaid;
For ever active is the power of Jove,
From whom perpetual blessings flow:
Oh! that I now could, like the dove,
Soar through the skies, and mark the field below,
The wished-for conquest joyful to behold,
And triumph in the victory I foretold!

Antistrophe 2.

Thou power supreme, all powers above,
All-seeing, all-performing Jove,
Grant that the rulers of this land
May soon subdue the hostile band!
Thee, too, O Pallas! hunter Phœbus, thee
Do we invoke, with thee be joined
Thy virgin sister deity,
Who loves o'er lawns to chase the spotted hind;
On you we call, your aid propitious bring,
Oh! haste, protect our country and our king. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

Scene I.

Œdipus, Theseus, Antigone, Ismene, Chorus.

Chor. I'm no false prophet, stranger, for behold
Thy daughters.
Œdi. Ha! what sayst thou? Where, oh! where?
Ant. My father! O my father! what kind god
Raised up this friend who hath restored us to thee?
Œdi. Are then my daughters with me?
Ant. Theseus' arm
Hath brought us here: to him and to his friends
We owe our safety.
Œdi. Oh! come nigh, my children;
Let me embrace you. Never did I think
Again to fold you in these arms.
Ant. We come
With joy, my father.
Œdi. Oh! where are you?
Ant. Here.
Œdi. My dearest children!
Ant. To our father still
May every pleasure come!
Œdi. [*leaning on* Antigone]. My best support!
Ant. The wretched bear the wretched.
Œdi. [*embracing them*]. I have all
That's precious to me: were I now to die
Whilst you are here, I should not be unhappy.
Support me, daughters, to your father's side
Close pressed. Oh! soothe to peace a wretched exile,
Long time deserted. Tell me what hath happened;
But let the tale be short, as best becomes
Thy tender age.
Ant. [*pointing to* Theseus]. Here is our great protector,

He will inform you; so shall what I speak
Be brief, as thou wouldst have it.
 ŒDI. Noble Theseus,
My children thus beyond my hopes restored,
If I should talk too long on such a theme,
Thou wilt not wonder. 'Tis to thee alone
I owe my joys; thou didst protect and save
My much-loved daughters: may the gods repay
Thee and thy kingdom for this goodness to me!
Here only have I found or faith, or truth,
Or justice; you alone possess them all.
I will attest it, for I know it well.
I feel your virtues; what I have is all
From you. O king! permit me but to touch
Thy hand. Oh! stretch it forth; or let me kiss
Thy honoured lips. But, oh! what do I say?
Can such a wretch as Œdipus e'er hope
With guilty hands to touch a man like thee,
So pure, so spotless? Yet I must embrace thee;
They only who have known misfortune feel
For others' griefs with sympathizing woe.
Hail, best of men! and mayst thou ever be,
As thou hast been, my guardian and my friend!
 THE. Thus happy as thou must be in thy children,
Hadst thou said more, much more, and talked to them
Rather than me, it had not moved my wonder;
Nor think I should resent it. Not by words
Would Theseus be distinguished, but by deeds
Illustrious. This thou knowst, for what I swore
I have performed—restored thy daughters to thee,
Safe from the tyrant's threats. How passed the conflict
Why should I boast? They at their leisure best
May tell you all. Meantime to what I heard
As hither coming, Œdipus, attend.
Of little import seemed the circumstance,
And yet 'twas strange; but nought should mortal man
Deem or beneath his notice or his care.
 ŒDI. What is it, son of Ægeus? Oh! inform me,
For nothing have I heard.
 THE. A man, they say,
Who boasts himself by blood allied to thee,

At Neptune's altar, whilst I sacrificed,
In humblest posture stood.

ŒDI. What could it mean?
Whence came he?

THE. That I know not; this alone
They told me: suppliant he requested much
To talk a while with thee.

ŒDI. With me? 'Tis strange,
And yet methinks important.

THE. He desired
But to converse with thee, and then depart.

ŒDI. Who can it be?

THE. Hast thou no friend at Argos,
None of thy kindred there who wished to see thee?

ŒDI. No more, my friend.

THE. What sayst thou?

ŒDI. Do not ask me.

THE. Ask what——

ŒDI. I know him now; I know too well
Who 's at the altar.

THE. Who is it?

ŒDI. My son—
That hateful son, whose voice I loathe to hear.

THE. But why not hear him? Still thou mayst refuse
What he shall ask.

ŒDI. I cannot, cannot bear it:
Do not oblige me.

THE. But the sacred place
Where now he stands, and reverence to the gods,
Demand it of thee.

ANT. Let me, O my father!
Young as I am, admonish thee. Oh! grant
Thy friend his just request; obey the gods,
And let our brother come: whate'er he says
It need not draw thee from thy first resolve.
What harm to hear him? Words have oft produced
The noblest works. Remember, 'tis thy child—
Thou didst beget him; though he were the worst
Of sons to thee, yet would it ill become
A father to return it. Let him come.
Others like thee have base, unworthy children,

And yet their minds are softened to forgiveness
By friends' advice, and all their wrath subdued.
Think on thy own unhappy parent's fate,
Thence mayst thou learn what dreadful ills have flowed
From anger's bitter fountain; thou, alas!
Art a sad proof; those sightless eyes too well
Bear witness to it. Those who only ask
What justice warrants, should not ask in vain;
Nor who receives a benefit, forget
The hand that gave, but study to repay it.

ŒDI. You have o'ercome me: with reluctant pleasure
I yield. My children, be it as you please;
But if he comes, O Theseus! guard my life.

THE. I've said enough; no more. I will not boast,
But thou art safe if Heaven forsake not me.

SCENE II.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

In sacred wisdom's path is seldom seen
The wretch, whom sordid love of wealth inspires;
Neglectful of the happy golden mean,
His soul nor truth nor heavenly knowledge fires;
No length of days to him can pleasure bring,
In death alone he finds repose,
End of his wishes and his woes;
In that uncomfortable night
Where never music's charms delight,
Nor virgin choirs their hymeneals sing.

Antistrophe.

The happiest fate of man is not to be;
And next in bliss is he who soon as born,
From the vain world and all its sorrows free,
Shall whence he came with speediest foot return;

For youth is full of folly, toils, and woes,
Of war, sedition, pain, and strife,
With all the busy ills of life,
Till helpless age come creeping on,
Deserted, friendless, and alone,
Which neither power nor joy nor pleasure knows.

Epode.

The hapless Œdipus, like me,
Is doomed to age and misery;
E'en as around the northern shore
The bleak winds howl and tempests roar,
Contending storms in terror meet,
And dashing waves for ever beat;
Thus is the wretched king with grief oppressed,
And woes on woes afflict his long-distempered breast.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

ANT. This way, my father. Lo! the wretched man
Approaches, unattended, and in tears.
ŒDI. Who comes, my child?
ANT. E'en he I told thee of—
Poor Polynices.

SCENE II.

POLYNICES, ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

POL. O my sisters! see
Of all mankind the most unhappy. Where
Shall I begin? shall I lament my own,
Or shall I weep an aged parent's fate?
For, oh! 'tis horrible to find him thus

A wandering exile in a foreign land;
In this mean garb, with wild dishevelled hair,
Bereft of sight, and destitute, perhaps,
Of needful food and nourishment. Alas!
Too late I know it; worthless as I am,
I flew to succour him, to plead my cause,
That not from others he might hear the tale
Of my misfortunes. Sacred pity sits
Fast by the throne of Jove, o'er all his works
Presiding gracious. Oh! let her inspire
Thy breast, my father. Crimes already done,
Which cannot be recalled, may still be healed
By kind forgiveness: why, then, art thou silent?
Oh! speak, my father; do not turn aside.
Wilt thou not answer? Wilt thou let me go
Without one word; nor tell me whence thy wrath
Contemptuous springs? My sisters, you at least
Will try to move his unrelenting heart,
And loosen his closed lips, that not thus spurned
And thus unanswered, though a suppliant here
At Neptune's altar, I return with shame
And foul disgrace.

ANT. Say, wherefore didst thou come,
My hapless brother? Tell thy mournful tale;
Such is the power of words, that whether sweet
They move soft pity, or when bitter urge
To violence and wrath, at least they ope
Th' unwilling lips, and make the silent speak.

POLY. 'Tis well advised, and I will tell thee all.
Oh! may that deity propitious smile
Whose altar late I left, whence Theseus raised
This wretched suppliant, and in converse free
Mixed gracious with me! May I hope from you
The like benevolence? And now, my father,
I'll tell thee wherefore Polynices came.
Thou seest me banished from my native land—
Unjustly banished, for no other crime
But that I strove to keep the throne of Thebes,
By birthright mine, from him who drove me thence,
The young Eteocles: not his the claim
By justice, nor to me his fame in arms

Superior; but by soft persuasive arts
He won the rebel city to his love.
Thy curse, my father, was the cause of all—
I know it was; for so the priests declared
In oracles divine. To Argos then
I came, and, to Adrastus' daughter joined
In marriage, gained the Argive chiefs, renowned
For martial deeds; seven valiant leaders march
To Thebes, resolved to conquer or to die.
Therefore to thee, my father, came I here,
To beg thy aid for me and these my friends,
Companions of the war, who threaten Thebes
With their united powers, in order thus:
The wise and brave Amphiaraus, or skilled
To cast the spear, or with prophetic tongue
Disclose the will of Heaven; with Œneus' son
Ætolian Tydeus, and Eteocles,
At Argos born; to these Hippomedon,
Sent by Talaus, his renowned sire;
Bold Capaneus, who threatens soon to raze
The walls of mighty Thebes; to close the train,
Parthenopæan Arcas comes, the son
Of Atalantis, from her virgin name
So called. With these thy hapless son (the child
Of dire misfortune rather) leads his force
From Argos to rebellious Thebes. For these,
And for their children, for the lives of all,
Suppliant to thee we come—in humble prayer
To deprecate thy wrath against a wretch
Who, injured much, but seeks the vengeance due
To a base brother, whose oppressive hand
Hath drove me from my country and my throne.
If there be truth in what the gods declare,
On him shall victory smile for whom thy vows
Shall rise propitious; therefore, by our gods
And native fountains, oh! remit thy anger,
And smile upon me, on a banished man,
A beggar like thyself, who lives, like thee,
By others' bounty—in one common fate
We are united, whilst the tyrant sits
In ease at home, and laughs our woes to scorn.

Yet if thou wouldst but listen to my vows,
Soon might I cast him forth, restore thee soon
To thy dear native land, and seat myself
In my own kingdom. Thy assent, my father,
Is all I ask; but, oh! without thy aid
I have no hope of safety or revenge.

CHOR. For Theseus' sake, oh! give him answer now,
And let him go.

ŒDI. But that the noble Theseus,
Who hither brought him did request it of me,
He ne'er had heard the voice ef Œdipus;
And little pleasure will it now bestow.
Ungrateful wretch! who, when the throne of Thebes,
[*turning to* POLYNICES
Where now thy brother sits, was thine, didst drive
Thy father hence, to penury and woe,
Now, when thou seest me in this mean attire,
Thou weepst my fate because 'tis like thy own;
But I'll not weep, for I can bear it all,
Still, wicked parricide, remembering thee,
The cruel cause of all; thou mad'st me thus
On others' bounty to rely for food
And nourishment; for thee, I might have perished,
But these my pious daughters, these alone,
Beyond their sex's power, with manly aid
Have cherished and protected me. For you,
Who call yourselves my sons, ye are not mine—
I know you not; though Heaven hath spared you long
Death will o'ertake you. When thy forces come
To Thebes, which shall not fall before thy arms,
There soon shalt thou, and thy vile brother, die.
Long since my curses did declare thy fate,
Which here I do repeat, that you may learn
The reverence due to parents, and no more
Reproach a sightless father. Look on these,
My duteous daughters: did they act like you?
They never did; and therefore to the throne
Which you have forfeited shall they succeed,
If justice still, as she is ever wont,
Sits at the hand of Jove. Meantime thou worst,
Thou most abandoned of the race of men,

Begone—away! and with thee bear this curse
Which here I do pronounce: To Argos ne'er
Mayst thou return! never may Thebes be thine!
Soon mayst thou perish by a brother's hand,
Slaying the slayer! may dark Erebus
Receive them both! And now on you I call,
Ye goddesses revered, and thou, O Mars!
Thou who hast raised the bitter strife between
My impious sons, bear witness to my words!
Farewell! Now go, and tell the Thebans, tell
Thy faithful friends, how fair an heritage
Your Œdipus hath here bequeathed his children.

CHOR. O Polynices! little is the joy
Which we can give thee of this fatal journey;
Therefore away and leave us.

POLY. A sad path
These steps have trod indeed, of woe to me
And to my friends. Was it for this, alas!
I came from Argos? I can never tell
My mournful story there, never return;
Oh! I must bury it in silence all.
My sisters, ye have heard the dreadful curse
Which he pronounced. Oh! if it be fulfilled,
And some kind hand restore you back to Thebes,
At least remember me; at least perform
The funeral rights, and hide me in the tomb;
So shall your names, for pious tenderness
To an unhappy father long revered,
With added praises crowned, exalted shine,
For this kind office to a brother's shade.

ANT. O Polynices! let me beg thee, hear
Thy sister now.

POLY. My dear Antigone,
What sayst thou?

ANT. Lead thy armies back to Argos,
Nor thus destroy thy country and thyself.

POLY. It cannot be; my forces once dismissed
Through fear, what power shall e'er reunite them?

ANT. But wherefore all this rage? What canst thou hope
Of fame or profit by the fall of Thebes?

POLY. 'Tis base to fly, and, eldest born as I am,
To be the laughter of a younger brother.

ANT. Dost thou not dread the oracles pronounced
Against you both—death by each other's hand?

POLY. I know the sentence; but we must go on.

ANT. Alas! and who shall dare to follow thee
After this dire prediction?

POLY. None shall know it.
The prudent general tells the good alone,
And keeps the threatened ill unknown to all.

ANT. Art thou determined then, and wilt thou go?

POLY. Do not dissuade me, for the task is mine;
And though a father's fatal curse attend me,
Though vengeful furies shall await my steps,
Yet I must go. May Jove indulgent smile
On you, my sisters, if when I am dead,
As soon I shall be, to my breathless corpse
You pay due honours! Now, farewell for ever,
For living ye shall ne'er again behold me.

ANT. Alas! my brother!

POLY. Do not weep for me.

ANT. Who would not weep to see thee rushing thus
On certain death?

POLY. If I must die, I must.

ANT. Yet be persuaded.

POLY. Ask me not to do
A deed unworthy of me.

ANT. Losing thee,
I shall be most unhappy.

POLY. To the gods
Alone belong the fate of mortals; some
Are born to happiness and some to woe.
You may they guard from every ill, for sure
Ye merit all the good they can bestow.

[*Exit* POLYNICES

SCENE III.

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

CHOR. Fresh sorrows hath this hapless stranger brought
On me and all; but so hath Heaven decreed,
Which nothing doth in vain; whilst time beholds
And orders all, inflicting woe on woe.
But, hark! the thunder roars: almighty Jove!

ŒDI. My daughters! O my daughters! who will bring
The noble Theseus here, that best of men?

ANT. Wherefore, my father, should we call him hither?

ŒDI. This winged lightning from the arm of Jove
Must bear me to the shades below. Where 's Theseus?
Let him be sent for instantly.

CHOR. Again,
Another dreadful clap! It strikes my soul
With horror, and my hairs do stand on end
With fear. Behold, again the lightnings flash!
I dread the consequence, for not in vain
These signs appear of some calamity
Portentous ever, O ethereal Jove!

ŒDI. Alas! my children, nought can save me now;
The fatal hour of my departure hence
Draws nigh.

ANT. Why thinkst thou so?

ŒDI. I know it well.
Send for the king immediately.

CHOR. Alas!
The thunder rolls on every side. Good Heaven,
Protect us! If to this devoted land
It bodes destruction, let not ruin fall
On me. Oh! let not that be our reward
For pitying thus a poor deserted stranger.
O Jove! on thee we call: protect and save us!

ŒDI. Is Theseus come? shall he once more behold me,
Whilst yet I live, and keep my perfect mind?

CHOR. What secret hast thou to reveal to him?

ŒDI. I owe him much, and would repay his goodness,
E'en as I promised him.

CHOR. Oh! haste, my son;
At Neptune's altar leave the sacrifice
And hither fly, for Œdipus, to thee
And to thy country grateful, waits to pay
Thy bounties. Haste, O Theseus! to receive them.

SCENE IV.

THESEUS, ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

THE. Again this noise, this wild astonishment,
Amongst you all! Was Œdipus the cause?
Or did the bolt of Jove and rushing hail
Affright you? When the god in raging storms
Descends thus dreadful, we have cause to fear.

ŒDI. O king! thou com'st in happy hour; some god
Propitious led thee hither.

THE. Son of Laius,
What new event hath happened?

ŒDI. Know, my life
At length is verging to its latest hour;
I wish to die, but first my vows to thee,
And to this city, faithful must perform.

THE. But who hath told thee thou so soon shalt die?

ŒDI. The gods themselves, who never utter falsehood,
By signs infallible have warned me of it.

THE. How spake they to thee?

ŒDI. In repeated thunder
And lightning from th' all-powerful hand of Jove.

THE. I do believe thee, for thy prophecies
Were never false; but say, what must be done?

ŒDI. O son of Ægeus! I will tell thee all
The bliss reserved for thee in thy age—
For thee, and for thy country. I must go
To my appointed place, and there shall die:
I go without a guide, nor must thou tell

To mortal ear where Œdipus doth lie,
For ever hid. O king! that sacred place
Shall be thy sure defence, and better far
Than many a shield, or all the social aid
Of firm alliance in the field of war.
What more remains, unutterable now,
Of higher import, thither when thou com'st
To thee alone shall be delivered; nought
Shall I reveal, or to the citizens,
Or e'en to those, beloved as they are,
My pious daughters. Thou must ever keep
The solemn secret; only, when thy life
Draws near its end, disclose it to thy son,
Heir of thy kingdom, and to him alone.
From king to king thus shall the tale devolve,
And thus thy Athens be for ever safe
From Theban force; even the best of cities,
Where justice rules, may swerve from virtue's laws
And be oppressive; but the gods, though late,
Will one day punish all who disobey
Their sacred mandates; therefore, son of Ægeus,
Be careful and be just: but this to thee
I need not say. Quick, let us to the place,
For so the gods decree; there must I go,
Thence never to return. Come then, my daughters:
Long have you been my pious guides; henceforth
I must be yours. Follow, but touch me not;
Let me find out the tomb where I must hide
My poor remains: that way my journey lies.
[*Pointing with his hand.*
Away: thou god of shades, great Mercury,
And Proserpine, infernal powers, conduct me!
O sightless eyes! where are ye? Never more
Shall these hands touch your unavailing orbs.
O light and life! farewell: at length I go
To hide me in the tomb; but oh! for thee,
My best beloved friend, and this fair land,
And these thy subjects, may prosperity
Attend you still, and may you sometimes deign
Amidst your bliss to think on Œdipus! [*Exeunt.*

CHOR. Goddess invisible, on thee we call,

If thee we may invoke, Proserpina, and thee
Great Pluto, king of shades, oh! grant
That not, oppressed by torturing pain,
Beneath the stroke of death he linger long,
But swift with easy steps descend,
To Styx's drear abode;
For he hath led a life of toil and pain;
May the just gods repay his undeserved woe!
Ye goddesses revered, who dwell
Beneath the earth deep hid, and thou,
Who, barking from thy gloomy cave,
Unconquered Cerberus, guardst the ghosts below,
On thee, O son of Tartarus! we call,
For thou art ever wakeful—lead, oh! lead
To thy dark mansions this unhappy stranger.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

Scene I.

Messenger, Chorus.

Messenger. O citizens! I come to tell a tale——
But to be brief, know, Œdipus is dead.
To speak the manner and strange circumstance
Of his departure will require more words,
And calls for your attention.

Chor. Is he gone?
Unhappy man!

Mes. For ever hath he left
The path of life.

Chor. How died he?—by the hand
Of Heaven dismissed, without disease or pain?

Mes. Oh! 'twas a scene of wonder. How he left
This place, and, self-conducted, led us on,
Blind as he was, ye all remember well.

Soon as he came to where the craggy steep
With brazen steps leads to the hollow gulf,
Where various paths unite, a place renowned
For the famed league of Theseus and his friend,
Between Acherdus and the Thracian rock,
On a sepulchral stone he sat him down;
Pulled off the filthy weeds he long had worn,
And bade his daughters instantly prepare
The bath and splendid garb; with hasty steps
To Ceres' neighbouring altar they repair
Obedient, bring the vessel, and the robe
Funereal. All things done as custom bids
For dying men, sudden a dreadful clap
Of thunder shook the ground; the virgins trembled,
And clinging fearful round their father's knees
Beat their sad breasts, and wept. Soon as he heard
The sound portentous, he embraced his daughters:
"Children," he cried, "your father is no more;
No longer shall you lead a life of pain,
No longer toil for Œdipus. Alas!
'Twas dreadful to you, but this day, my children,
Shall end your sorrows and my life together.
Never did father love his daughters more
Than I have loved; but henceforth you must live
Without your Œdipus. Farewell for ever!"
He spake, and long, in sad embraces joined,
They wept aloud; at length did clamorous grief
To silent sorrow yield, and all was still;
When suddenly we heard a voice that oft
Repeated, "Œdipus, why this delay?
Where art thou, Œdipus?" The wretched king,
Attentive to the call of Heaven, desired
That Theseus might be sent for; Theseus came,
When thus the dying exile: "O my friend!
Give me thy hand, my daughters give him yours;
Let this, my dearest Theseus, be the pledge
Of amity between you; promise here
That you will ne'er forsake my hapless children,
But henceforth cherish, comfort, and protect them."
The generous king, in pity to their woes,
Vowed to perform what Œdipus desired.

The father threw his feeble arms around
His weeping children. "You," he cried, "must learn
To bear your sufferings with an equal mind,
And leave this place; for not to mortal eye
Is given to see my future fate. Away!
Theseus alone must stay, and know it all."
This did we hear him utter as we stood
Attentive; when his duteous daughters left him,
And went their way, we wept, and followed them.
Soon we returned, but Œdipus was gone;
The king alone remaining, as if struck
With terror at some dreadful spectacle,
Had with his hand o'er-veiled his downcast eye;
A little after, we beheld him bend
In humble adoration to the earth,
And then to heaven prefer his ardent prayer.
How the poor exile perished none can tell
But Theseus; nor the fiery blast of Jove
Destroyed, nor sea o'erwhelmed him, but from heaven
Some messenger divine did snatch him hence,
Or power infernal bade the pitying earth
Open her peaceful bosom to receive him;
Without a groan, disease, or pain he fell.
'Twas wondrous all; to those who credit not
This strange report, I answer, 'Tis most true.

CHOR. Where are his daughters, with their weeping friends
Who followed them?

MES. They cannot be far off;
The voice of grief I hear proclaims them nigh.

SCENE II.

ANTIGONE, ISMENE (*with Attendants*), MESSENGER, CHORUS.

ANT. Alas! the time is come when we must weep
Our father's fate, the fate of all his race
Long since unhappy. Various were the toils,

The labours we endured, but this is far,
Far above all, unutterable woe.

CHOR. What is it?

ANT. Oh! it cannot be conceived.

CHOR. Is he then dead?

ANT. He is; his death was strange
And wonderful, for not in war he fell,
Nor did the sea o'erwhelm him, but the earth
Hath hid him from us; deadly night hath closed
Our eyes in sadness; whether o'er the seas
We roam, or exiles in a foreign land
Lead our sad days, we must be still unhappy.
Alas! I only wish I might have died
With my poor father; wherefore should I ask
For longer life?

CHOR. Ye good and pious daughters,
Remember, what the will of Heaven decrees
With patience we must bear; indulge not then
Excess of grief—your faith hath not deserved it.

ANT. Oh! I was fond of misery with him;
E'en what was most unlovely grew beloved
When he was with me, O my dearest father!
Beneath the earth now in deep darkness hid,
Worn as thou wert with age, to me thou still
Wert dear, and shalt be ever.

CHOR. Now his course
Is finished.

ANT. Even as he wished, he died
In a strange land—for such was his desire;
A shady turf covered his lifeless limbs;
Nor unlamented fell; for oh! these eyes,
My father, still shall weep for thee, nor time
Ere blot thee from my memory.

ISM. Alas!
Alas! my sister, what must be our fate,
Forlorn and helpless, of our father thus
Bereft?

CHOR. His end was happy, therefore cease
Your fruitless tears: from sorrow none is free.

ANT. Let us be gone.

ISM. But where?

I wish——

ANT. Oh! what?

ISM.

ANT. To see the tomb.

Whose tomb?

ISM. Our father's. Oh!

ANT.

ISM. But is it lawful? Knowst thou that?

ANT. Why thus

Reprove me, my Ismene?

ISM. He is yet

Unburied, and without——

ANT. Oh! lead me there,

Then kill me if thou wilt; for where, alas!

Can I betake me?

CHOR. Friends, be comforted.

ANT. Where shall I fly?

CHOR. Thou hast already 'scaped

Unnumbered ills.

ANT. I'm thinking, my Ismene——

ISM. What thinkst thou?

ANT. How we shall get home.

CHOR. No more;

Thou hast been long familiar with affliction.

ANT. My life hath ever been a life of pain

And sorrow, but this far exceeds them all.

CHOR. The storm beats hard upon you.

ANT. Oh! it doth.

CHOR. I know it must.

ANT. Oh! whither shall we fly?

Great Jove! what hope remains?

CHOR. Suppress your griefs;

We should not weep for those who wished to die,

And meet their fate with pleasure; 'tis not just

Nor lawful to lament them.

SCENE III.

THESEUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

ANT. Son of Ægeus,

Suppliant to thee we come.

THE. What would ye of me?
ANT. Permit us but to see our father's tomb.
THE. It is not lawful.
ANT. Oh! what sayst thou, king?
THE. Know, pious virgins, Œdipus himself
Forbade that any should approach his tomb;
That sacred spot, which he possesses there,
No mortal must profane; to me, he said,
If careful I performed his last command,
Should joy and safety come, with victory
And peace to Athens; this your gods did hear
Confirmed by the sacred oath of Jove.
ANT. If such our father's will, we must submit;
But, oh! permit us to revisit Thebes,
That so we may prevent th' impending fate
Of our dear brothers.
THE. All that you request,
Or may be grateful to that honoured shade
Whose memory we revere, I freely grant;
For I must not be weary of my task.
CHOR. Remember, virgins, to repress your sorrows,
And cease your fruitless grief; for know, 'tis all
Decreed by fate, and all the work of Heaven.

EURIPIDES

MEDEA

TRANSLATED BY

MICHAEL WODHULL

MEDEA.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

NURSE OF MEDEA.
ATTENDANT ON THE CHILDREN.
MEDEA.
CHORUS OF CORINTHIAN WOMEN.
CREON.
JASON.
ÆGEUS.
MESSENGER.
THE TWO SONS OF JASON AND MEDEA.

SCENE—BEFORE THE PALACE OF CREON AT CORINTH.

NURSE.

AH! would to heaven the Argo ne'er had urged
Its rapid voyage to the Colchian strand
'Twixt the Cyanean rocks, nor had the pine
Been fell in Pelion's forests, nor the hands
Of those illustrious chiefs, who that famed bark
Ascended to obtain, the golden fleece
For royal Pelias, plied the stubborn oar;
So to Iolchos' turrets had my Queen
Medea never sailed, her soul with love
For Jason smitten, nor, as since her arts
Prevailed on Pelias' daughters to destroy
Their father, in this realm of Corinth dwelt
An exile with her husband and her sons;
Thus to the citizens whose land received her
Had she grown pleasing, and in all his schemes
Assisted Jason: to the wedded pair,
Hence bliss supreme arises, when the bond
Of concord joins them: now their souls are filled
With ruthless hate, and all affection's lost:
For false to his own sons, and her I serve,

With a new consort of imperial birth
Sleeps the perfidious Jason, to the daughter
Of Creon wedded, lord of these domains.
The wretched scorned Medea oft exclaims,
"O by those oaths, by that right hand thou gav'st
The pledge of faith!" She then invokes the gods
To witness what requital she hath found
From Jason. On a couch she lies, no food
Receiving, her whole frame subdued by grief;
And since she marked the treachery of her lord
Melts into tears incessant, from the ground
Her eyes she never raises, never turns
Her face aside, but steadfast as a rock,
Or as the ocean's rising billows, hears
The counsels of her friends, save when she weeps
In silent anguish, with her snowy neck
Averted, for her sire, her native land,
And home, which she forsaking hither came
With him who scorns her now. She from her woes
Too late hath learnt how enviable the lot
Of those who leave not their paternal roof.
She even hates her children, nor with joy
Beholds them: much I dread lest she contrive
Some enterprise unheard of, for her soul
Is vehement, nor will she tamely brook
Injurious treatment; well, full well I know
Her temper, which alarms me, lest she steal
Into their chamber, where the genial couch
Is spread, and with the sword their vitals pierce,
Or to the slaughter of the bridegroom add
That of the monarch, and in some mischance,
Yet more severe than death, herself involve:
For dreadful is her wrath, nor will the object
Of her aversion gain an easy triumph.
But lo, returning from the race, her sons
Draw near: they think not of their mother's woes,
For youthful souls are strangers to affliction.

ATTENDANT, *with the* SONS *of* JASON *and* MEDEA, NURSE.

ATT. O thou, who for a length of time hast dwelt
Beneath the roofs of that illustrious dame
I serve, why stand'st thou at these gates alone
Repeating to thyself a doleful tale:
Or wherefore by Medea from her presence
Art thou dismissed?

NUR. Old man, O you who tend
On Jason's sons, to faithful servants aught
Of evil fortune that befalls their lords
Is a calamity: but such a pitch
Of grief am I arrived at, that I felt
An impulse which constrained me to come forth
From these abodes, and to the conscious earth
And heaven proclaim the lost Medea's fate.

ATT. Cease not the plaints of that unhappy dame?

NUR. Your ignorance I envy: for her woes
Are but beginning, nor have yet attained
Their mid career.

ATT. O how devoid of reason,
If we with terms thus harsh may brand our lords,
Of ills more recent nothing yet she knows.

NUR. Old man, what mean you? Scruple not to speak.

ATT. Nought. What I have already said repents me.

NUR. I by that beard conjure you not to hide
The secret from your faithful fellow-servant.
For I the strictest silence will observe
If it be needful.

ATT. Some one I o'erheard
(Appearing not to listen, as I came
Where aged men sit near Pirene's fount
And hurl their dice) say that from Corinth's land
Creon, the lord of these domains, will banish
The children with their mother; but I know not
Whether th' intelligence be true, and wish
It may prove otherwise.

NUR. Will Jason brook

Such an injurious treatment of his sons.
Although he be at variance with their mother?

ATT. By new connections are all former ties
Dissolved, and he no longer is a friend
To this neglected race.

NUR. We shall be plunged
In utter ruin, if to our old woes,
Yet unexhausted, any fresh we add.

ATT. Be silent, and suppress the dismal tale,
For 'tis unfit our royal mistress know.

NUR. Hear, O ye children, how your father's soul
Is turned against you: still, that he may perish
I do not pray, because he is my lord:
Yet treacherous to his friends hath he been found

ATT. Who is not treacherous? Hast thou lived so long
Without discerning how self-love prevails
O'er social? Some by glory, some by gain,
Are prompted. Then what wonder, for the sake
Of a new consort, if the father slight
These children?

NUR. Go, all will be well, go in.
Keep them as far as possible away,
Nor suffer them to come into the presence
Of their afflicted mother; for her eyes
Have I just seen with wild distraction fired,
As if some horrid purpose against them
She meant to execute; her wrath I know
Will not be pacified, till on some victim
It like a thunderbolt from Heaven descends;
May she assail her foes alone, nor aim
The stroke at those she ought to hold most dear.

MED. [*within.*] Ah me! how grievous are my woes! What means
Can I devise to end this hated life?

NUR. 'Tis as I said: strong agitations seize
Your mother's heart, her choler's raised. Dear children,
Beneath these roofs flie instantly, nor come
Into her sight, accost her not, beware
Of these ferocious manners and the rage
Which boils in that ungovernable spirit.

Go with the utmost speed, for I perceive
Too clearly that her plaints, which in thick clouds
Arise at first, will kindle ere 'tis long
With tenfold violence. What deeds of horror
From that high-soaring, that remorseless soul,
May we expect, when goaded by despair!

[*Exeunt* ATTENDANT *and* SONS.

MED. [*within.*] I have endured, alas! I have endured—
Wretch that I am!—such agonies as call
For loudest plaints. Ye execrable sons
Of a devoted mother, perish ye
With your false sire, and perish his whole house!

NUR. Why should the sons—ah, wretched me!—partake
Their father's guilt? Why hat'st thou them? Ah me!
How greatly, O ye children, do I fear
Lest mischief should befall you: for the souls
Of kings are prone to cruelty, so seldom
Subdued, and over others wont to rule,
That it is difficult for such to change
Their angry purpose. Happier I esteem
The lot of those who still are wont to live
Among their equals. May I thus grow old,
If not in splendour, yet with safety blest!
For first of all, renown attends the name
Of mediocrity, and to mankind
Such station is more useful: but not long
Can the extremes of grandeur ever last;
And heavier are the curses which it brings
When Fortune visits us in all her wrath.

CHORUS, NURSE.

CHOR. The voice of Colchos' hapless dame I heard—
A clamorous voice, nor yet is she appeased.
Speak, O thou aged matron, for her cries
I from the innermost apartment heard;
Nor can I triumph in the woes with which
This house is visited; for to my soul
Dear are its interests.

NUR. This whole house is plunged

In ruin, and its interests are no more.
While Corinth's palace to our lord affords
A residence, within her chamber pines
My mistress, and the counsels of her friends
Afford no comfort to her tortured soul.

MED. [*within.*] O that a flaming thunderbolt from Heaven
Would pierce this brain! for what can longer life
To me avail? Fain would I seek repose
In death, and cast away this hated being.

CHOR. Heard'st thou, all-righteous Jove, thou fostering earth,
And thou, O radiant lamp of day, what plaints,
What clamorous plaints this miserable wife
Hath uttered? Through insatiable desire,
Ah why would you precipitate your death?
O most unwise! These imprecations spare.
What if your lord's affections are engaged
By a new bride, reproach him not, for Jove
Will be the dread avenger of your wrongs;
Nor melt away with unavailing grief,
Weeping for the lost partner of your bed.

MED. [*within.*] Great Themis and Diana, awful queen,
Do ye behold the insults I endure,
Though by each oath most holy I have bound
That execrable husband. May I see
Him and his bride, torn limb from limb, bestrew
The palace; me have they presumed to wrong,
Although I ne'er provoked them. O my sire,
And thou my native land, whence I with shame
Departed when my brother I had slain.

NUR. Heard ye not all she said, with a loud voice
Invoking Themis, who fulfils the vow,
And Jove, to whom the tribes of men look up
As guardian of their oaths. Medea's rage
Can by no trivial vengeance be appeased.

CHOR. Could we but draw her hither, and prevail
On her to hear the counsels we suggest,
Then haply might she check that bitter wrath,
That vehemence of temper; for my zeal
Shall not be spared to aid my friends. But go,

And say, "O hasten, ere to those within
Thou do some mischief, for these sorrows rush
With an impetuous tempest on thy soul."

NUR. This will I do; though there is cause to fear
That on my mistress I shall ne'er prevail:
Yet I my labour gladly will bestow.
Though such a look she on her servants casts
As the ferocious lioness who guards
Her tender young, when any one draws near
To speak to her. Thou wouldst not judge amiss,
In charging folly and a total want
Of wisdom on the men of ancient days,
Who for their festivals invented hymns,
And to the banquet and the genial board
Confined those accents which o'er human life
Diffuse ecstatic pleasures: but no artist
Hath yet discovered, by the tuneful song,
And varied modulations of the lyre,
How we those piercing sorrows may assuage
Whence slaughters and such horrid mischiefs spring
As many a prosperous mansion have o'erthrown.
Could music interpose her healing aid
In these inveterate maladies, such gift
Had been the first of blessings to mankind:
But, 'midst choice viands and the circling bowl,
Why should those minstrels strain their useless throat?
To cheer the drooping heart, convivial joys
Are in themselves sufficient. [*Exit* NURSE.

CHOR. Mingled groans
And lamentations burst upon mine ear:
She in the bitterness of soul exclaims
Against her impious husband, who betrayed
His plighted faith. By grievous wrongs opprest,
She the vindictive gods invokes, and Themis,
Jove's daughter, guardian of the sacred oath,
Who o'er the waves to Greece benignly steered
Their bark adventurous, launched in midnight gloom,
Through ocean's gates which never can be closed!

MEDEA, CHORUS.

MED. From my apartment, ye Corinthian dames,
Lest ye my conduct censure, I come forth :
For I have known full many who obtained
Fame and high rank ; some to the public gaze
Stood ever forth, while others, in a sphere
More distant, chose their merits to display :
Nor yet a few, who, studious of repose,
Have with malignant obloquy been called
Devoid of spirit : for no human eyes
Can form a just discernment ; at one glance,
Before the inmost secrets of the heart
Are clearly known, a bitter hate 'gainst him
Who never wronged us they too oft inspire.
But 'tis a stranger's duty to adopt
The manners of the land in which he dwells ;
Nor can I praise that native, led astray
By mere perverseness and o'erweening folly,
Who bitter enmity incurs from those
Of his own city. But, alas ! my friends,
This unforeseen calamity hath withered
The vigour of my soul. I am undone,
Bereft of every joy that life can yield,
And therefore wish to die. For as to him,
My husband, whom it did import me most
To have a thorough knowledge of, he proves
The worst of men. But sure among all those
Who have with breath and reason been endued,
We women are the most unhappy race.
First, with abundant gold are we constrained
To buy a husband, and in him receive
A haughty master. Still doth there remain
One mischief than this mischief yet more grievous,
The hazard whether we procure a mate
Worthless or virtuous : for divorces bring
Reproach to woman, nor must she renounce
The man she wedded ; as for her who comes
Where usages and edicts, which at home

She learnt not, are established, she the gift
Of divination needs to teach her how
A husband must be chosen: if aright
These duties we perform, and he the yoke
Of wedlock with complacency sustains,
Ours is a happy life; but if we fail
In this great object, better 'twere to die.
For, when afflicted by domestic ills,
A man goes forth, his choler to appease,
And to some friend or comrade can reveal
What he endures; but we to him alone
For succour must look up. They still contend
That we, at home remaining, lead a life
Exempt from danger, while they launch the spear:
False are these judgments; rather would I thrice,
Armed with a target, in th' embattled field
Maintain my stand, than suffer once the throes
Of childbirth. But this language suits not you:
This is your native city, the abode
Of your loved parents, every comfort life
Can furnish is at hand, and with your friends
You here converse: but I, forlorn, and left
Without a home, am by that husband scorned
Who carried me from a Barbarian realm.
Nor mother, brother, or relation now
Have I, to whom I 'midst these storms of woe,
Like an auspicious haven, can repair.
Thus far I therefore crave ye will espouse
My interests, as if haply any means
Or any stratagem can be devised
For me with justice to avenge these wrongs
On my perfidious husband, on the king
Who to that husband's arms his daughter gave,
And the new-wedded princess; to observe
Strict silence. For although at other times
A woman, filled with terror, is unfit
For battle, or to face the lifted sword,
She when her soul by marriage wrongs is fired,
Thirsts with a rage unparalleled for blood.

CHOR. The silence you request I will observe,
For justly on your lord may you inflict
Severest vengeance: still I wonder not
If your disastrous fortunes you bewail:
But Creon I behold who wields the sceptre
Of these domains; the monarch hither comes
His fresh resolves in person to declare.

CREON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

CRE. Thee, O Medea, who, beneath those looks
Stern and forbidding, harbour'st 'gainst thy lord
Resentment, I command to leave these realms
An exile; for companions of thy flight
Take both thy children with thee, nor delay.
Myself pronounce this edict: I my home
Will not revisit, from the utmost bounds
Of this domain, till I have cast thee forth.

MED. Ah, wretched me! I utterly am ruined:
For in the swift pursuit, my ruthless foes,
Each cable loosing, have unfurled their sails,
Nor can I land on any friendly shore
To save myself, yet am resolved to speak,
Though punishment impend. What cause, O Creon
Have you for banishing me?

CRE. Thee I dread
(No longer is it needful to disguise
My thoughts) lest 'gainst my daughter thou contrive
Some evil such as medicine cannot reach.
Full many incidents conspire to raise
This apprehension: with a deep-laid craft
Art thou endued, expert in the device
Of mischiefs numberless, thou also griev'st
Since thou art severed from thy husband's bed.
I am informed, too, thou hast menaced vengeance
'Gainst me, because my daughter I bestowed
In marriage, and the bridegroom, and his bride.
Against these threats I therefore ought to guard
Before they take effect; and better far
Is it for me, O woman, to incur

Thy hatred now, than, soothed by thy mild words,
Hereafter my forbearance to bewail.

MED. Not now, alas! for the first time, but oft
To me, O Creon, hath opinion proved
Most baleful, and the source of grievous woes.
Nor ever ought the man, who is possest
Of a sound judgment, to train up his children
To be too wise: for they who live exempt
From war and all its toils, the odious name
Among their fellow-citizens acquire
Of abject sluggards. If to the unwise
You some fresh doctrine broach, you are esteemed
Not sapient, but a trifler: when to those
Who in their own conceit possess each branch
Of knowledge, you in state affairs obtain
Superior fame, to them you grow obnoxious.
I also feel the grievance I lament;
Some envy my attainments, others think
My temper uncomplying, though my wisdom
Is not transcendent. But from me it seems
You apprehend some violence; dismiss
Those fears; my situation now is such,
O Creon, that to monarchs I can give
No umbrage: and in what respect have you
Treated me with injustice? You bestowed
Your daughter where your inclination led.
Though I abhor my husband, I suppose
That you have acted wisely, nor repine
At your prosperity. Conclude the match;
Be happy: but allow me in this land
Yet to reside; for I my wrongs will bear
In silence, and to my superiors yield.

CRE. Soft is the sound of thy persuasive words,
But in my soul I feel the strongest dread
Lest thou devise some mischief, and now less
Than ever can I trust thee; for 'gainst those
Of hasty tempers with more ease we guard,
Or men or women, than the silent foe
Who acts with prudence. Therefore be thou gone

With speed, no answer make: it is decreed,
Nor hast thou art sufficient to avert
Thy doom of banishment; for well aware
Am I thou hat'st me.

MED. Spare me, by those knees
And your new-wedded daughter, I implore.

CRE. Lavish of words, thou never shalt persuade me.

MED. Will you then drive me hence, and to my prayers
No reverence yield?

CRE. I do not love thee more
Than those of my own house.

MED. With what regret
Do I remember thee, my native land!

CRE. Except my children, I hold nought so dear.

MED. To mortals what a dreadful scourge is love!

CRE. As fortune dictates, love becomes, I ween,
Either a curse or blessing.

MED. Righteous Jove,
Let not the author of my woes escape thee.

CRE. Away, vain woman, free me from my cares.

MED. No lack of cares have I.

CRE. Thou from this spot
Shalt by my servants' hands ere long be torn.

MED. Not thus, O Creon, I your mercy crave.

CRE. To trouble me, it seems, thou art resolved.

MED. I will depart, nor urge this fond request.

CRE. Why dost thou struggle then, nor from our realm
Withdraw thyself?

MED. Allow me this one day
Here to remain, till my maturer thoughts
Instruct me to what region I can fly,
Where for my sons find shelter, since their sire
Attends not to the welfare of his race.
Take pity on them, for you also know
What 'tis to be a parent, and must feel
Parental love: as for myself, I heed not
The being doomed to exile, but lament
Their hapless fortunes.

CRE. No tyrannic rage

Within this bosom dwells, but pity oft
Hath warped my better judgment, and though now
My error I perceive, shall thy bequest
Be granted. Yet of this must I forewarn thee:
If when to-morrow with his orient beams
Phœbus the world revisits, he shall view
Thee and thy children still within the bounds
Of these domains, thou certainly shalt die—
Th' irrevocable sentence is pronounced.
But if thou needs must tarry, tarry here
This single day, for in so short a space
Thou canst not execute the ills I dread. [*Exit* CREON.

CHOR. Alas! thou wretched woman, overpowered
By thy afflictions, whither wilt thou turn?
What hospitable board, what mansion, find,
Or country to protect thee from these ills?
Into what storms of misery have the gods
Caused thee to rush!

MED. On every side distress
Assails me: who can contradict this truth?
Yet think not that my sorrows thus shall end.
By yon new-wedded pair must be sustained
Dire conflicts, and no light or trivial woes
By them who in affinity are joined
With this devoted house. Can ye suppose
That I would e'er have soothed him, had no gain
Or stratagem induced me? Else to him
Never would I have spoken, nor once raised
My suppliant hands. But now is he so lost
In folly, that, when all my schemes with ease
He might have baffled, if he from this land
Had cast me forth, he grants me to remain
For this one day, and ere the setting sun
Three of my foes will I destroy—the sire,
The daughter, and my husband: various means
Have I of slaying them, and, O my friends,
Am at a loss to fix on which I first
Shall undertake, or to consume with flames
The bridal mansion, or a dagger plunge

Into their bosoms, entering unperceived
The chamber where they sleep. But there remains
One danger to obstruct my path: if caught
Stealing into the palace, and intent
On such emprise, in death shall I afford
A subject of derision to my foes.
This obvious method were the best, in which
I am most skilled, to take their lives away
By sorceries. Be it so; suppose them dead.
What city will receive me for its guest,
What hospitable foreigner afford
A shelter in his land, or to his hearth
Admit, or snatch me from impending fate?
Alas! I have no friend. I will delay
A little longer therefore; if perchance,
To screen me from destruction, I can find
Some fortress, then I in this deed of blood
With artifice and silence will engage;
But, if by woes inextricable urged
Too closely, snatching up the dagger them
Am I resolved to slay, although myself
Must perish too; for courage unappalled
This bosom animates. By that dread queen,
By her whom first of all th' immortal powers
I worship, and to aid my bold emprise
Have chosen, the thrice awful Hecaté,
Who in my innermost apartment dwells,
Not one of them shall triumph in the pangs
With which they wound my heart; for I will render
This spousal rite to them a plenteous source
Of bitterness and mourning—they shall rue
Their union, rue my exile from this land.
But now come on, nor, O Medea, spare
Thy utmost science to devise and frame
Deep stratagems, with swift career advance
To deeds of horror. Such a strife demands
Thy utmost courage. Hast thou any sense
Of these indignities? Nor is it fit
That thou, who spring'st from an illustrious sire,

And from that great progenitor the sun,
Shouldst be derided by the impious brood
Of Sisyphus, at Jason s nuptial feast
Exposed to scorn: for thou hast ample skill
To right thyself. Although by Nature formed
Without a genius apt for virtuous deeds,
We women are in mischiefs most expert.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

Now upward to their source the rivers flow,
And in a retrogade career
Justice and all the baffled virtues go.
The views of man are insincere,
Nor to the gods though he appeal,
And with an oath each promise seal,
Can he be trusted. Yet doth veering fame
Loudly assert the female claim,
Causing our sex to be renowned,
And our whole lives with glory crowned.
No longer shall we mourn the wrongs
Of slanderous and inhuman tongues.

I. 2.

Nor shall the Muses, as in ancient days,
Make the deceit of womankind
The constant theme of their malignant lays.
For ne'er on our uncultured mind
Hath Phœbus, god of verse, bestowed
Genius to frame the lofty ode;
Else had we waked the lyre, and in reply
With descants on man's infamy
Oft lengthened out th' opprobrious page.
Yet may we from each distant age
Collect such records as disgrace
Both us and man's imperious race.

II. 1.

By love distracted, from thy native strand,
Thou 'twixt the ocean's clashing rocks didst sail
But now, loathed inmate of a foreign land,
Thy treacherous husband's loss art doomed to wail.
O hapless matron, overwhelmed with woe,
From this unpitying realm dishonoured must thou go.

II. 2.

No longer sacred oaths their credit bear,
And virtuous shame hath left the Grecian plain,
She mounts to Heaven, and breathes a purer air.
For thee doth no paternal house remain
The sheltering haven from affliction's tides;
Over these hostile roofs a mightier queen presides.

JASON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

JAS. Not now for the first time, but oft, full oft
Have I observed that anger is a pest
The most unruly. For when in this land,
These mansions, you in peace might have abode,
By patiently submitting to the will
Of your superiors, you, for empty words,
Are doomed to exile. Not that I regard
Your calling Jason with incessant rage
The worst of men; but for those bitter taunts
With which you have reviled a mighty king,
Too mild a penalty may you esteem
Such banishment. I still have soothed the wrath
Of the offended monarch, still have wished
That you might here continue; but no bounds
Your folly knows, nor can that tongue e'er cease
To utter menaces against your lords;
Hence from these regions justly are you doomed
To be cast forth. But with unwearied love
Attentive to your interest am I come,
Lest with your children you by cruel want
Should be encompassed; exile with it brings

Full many evils. Me, though you abhor,
To you I harbour no unfriendly thought.

MED. Thou worst of villains (for this bitter charge
Against thy abject cowardice my tongue
May justly urge), com'st thou to me, O wretch,
Who to the gods art odious, and to me
And all the human race? It is no proof
Of courage, or of steadfastness, to face
Thy injured friends, but impudence, the worst
Of all diseases. Yet hast thou done well
In coming: I by uttering the reproaches
Which thou deservest shall ease my burdened soul,
And thou wilt grieve to hear them. With th' events
Which happened first will I begin my charge.
Each Grecian chief who in the Argo sailed
Knows how from death I saved thee, when to yoke
The raging bulls whose nostrils poured forth flames,
And sow the baleful harvest, thou wert sent:
Then having slain the dragon, who preserved
With many a scaly fold the golden fleece,
Nor ever closed in sleep his watchful eyes,
I caused the morn with its auspicious beams
To shine on thy deliverance; but, my sire
And native land betraying, came with thee
To Pelion, and Iolchos' gates: for love
Prevailed o'er reason. Pelias next I slew—
Most wretched death—by his own daughters' hands,
And thus delivered thee from all thy fears.
Yet though to me, O most ungrateful man,
Thus much indebted, hast thou proved a traitor,
And to the arms of this new consort fled,
Although a rising progeny is thine.
Hadst thou been childless, 'twere a venial fault
In thee to court another for thy bride.
But vanished is the faith which oaths erst bore,
Nor can I judge whether thou think'st the gods
Who ruled the world have lost their ancient power
Or that fresh laws at present are in force
Among mankind, because thou to thyself

Art conscious, thou thy plighted faith hast broken.
O my right hand, which thou didst oft embrace,
Oft to these knees a suppliant cling! How vainly
Did I my virgin purity yield up
To a perfidious husband, led astray
By flattering hopes! Yet I to thee will speak
As if thou wert a friend, and I expected
From thee some mighty favour to obtain:
Yet thou, if strictly questioned, must appear
More odious. Whither shall I turn me now?
To those deserted mansions of my father,
Which, with my country, I to thee betrayed,
And hither came; or to the wretched daughters
Of Pelias? They forsooth, whose sire I slew,
Beneath their roofs with kindness would receive me.
'Tis even thus: by those of my own house
Am I detested, and, to serve thy cause,
Those very friends, whom least of all I ought
To have unkindly treated, have I made
My enemies. But eager to reay
Such favours, 'mongst unnumbered Grecian dames,
On me superior bliss hast thou bestowed,
And I, unhappy woman, find in thee
A husband who deserves to be admired
For his fidelity. But from this realm
When I am exiled, and by every friend
Deserted, with my children left forlorn,
A glorious triumph, in thy bridal hour,
To thee will it afford, if those thy sons,
And I who saved thee, should like vagrants roam.
Wherefore, O Jove, didst thou instruct mankind
How to distinguish by undoubted marks
Counterfeit gold, yet in the front of vice
Impress no brand to show the tainted heart?

CHOR. How sharp their wrath, how hard to be appeased,
When friends with friends begin the cruel strife.

JAS. I ought not to be rash, it seems, in speech,
But like the skilful pilot, who, with sails
Scarce half unfurled, his bark more surely guides,

Escape, O woman, your ungoverned tongue.
Since you the benefits on me conferred
Exaggerate in so proud a strain, I deem
That I to Venus only, and no god
Or man beside, my prosperous voyage owe.
Although a wondrous subtlety of soul
To you belong, 'twere an invidious speech
For me to make should I relate how Love
By his inevitable shafts constrained you
To save my life. I will not therefore state
This argument too nicely, but allow,
As you did aid me, it was kindly done.
But by preserving me have you gained more
Than you bestowed, as I shall prove : and first,
Transplanted from barbaric shores, you dwell
In Grecian regions, and have here been taught
To act as justice and the laws ordain,
Nôr follow the caprice of brutal strength.
By all the Greeks your wisdom is perceived,
And you acquire renown ; but had you still
Inhabited that distant spot of earth,
You never had been named. I would not wish
For mansions heaped with gold, or to exceed
The sweetest notes of Orpheus' magic lyre,
Were those unfading wreaths which fame bestows
From me withheld by fortune. I thus far
On my own labours only have discoursed.
For you this odious strife of words began.
But in espousing Creon's royal daughter,
With which you have reproached me, I will prove
That I in acting thus am wise and chaste,
That I to you have been the best of friends,
And to our children. But make no reply.
Since hither from Iolchos' land I came,
Accompanied by many woes, and such
As could not be avoided, what device
More advantageous could an exile frame
Than wedding the king's daughter? Not through hate
To you, which you reproach me with, not smitten

With love for a new consort, or a wish
The number of my children to augment:
For those we have already might suffice,
And I complain not. But to me it seemed
Of great importance that we both might live
As suits our rank, nor suffer abject need,
Well knowing taht each friend avoids the poor.
I also wished to educate our sons
In such a manner as befits my race
And with their noble brothers yet unborn,
Make them one family, that thus, my house
Cementing, I might prosper. In some measure
Is it your interest too that by my bride
I should have sons, and me it much imports,
By future children, to provide for those
Who are in being. Have I judged amiss?
You would not censure me, unless your soul
Were by a rival stung. But your whole sex
Hath these ideas; if in marriage blest
Ye deem nought wanting, but if some reverse
Of fortune e'er betide the nuptial couch,
All that was good and lovely ye abhor.
Far better were it for the human race
Had children been produced by other means,
No females e'er existing: hence might man
Exempt from every evil have remained.

CHOR. Thy words hast thou with specious art adorned,
Yet thou to me (it is against my will
That I such language hold), O Jason, seem'st
Not to have acted justly in betraying
Thy consort.

MED. From the many I dissent
In many points: for, in my judgment, he
Who tramples on the laws, but can express
His thoughts with plausibility, deserves
Severest punishment: for that injustice
On which he glories, with his artful tongue,
That he a fair appearance can bestow,
He dares to practise, nor is truly wise.

No longer then this specious language hold
To me, who by one word can strike thee dumb.
Hadst thou not acted with a base design,
It was thy duty first to have prevailed
On me to give consent, ere these espousals
Thou hadst contracted, nor kept such design
A secret from thy friends.

JAS. You would have served
My cause most gloriously, had I disclosed
To you my purposed nuptials, when the rage
Of that proud heart still unsubdued remains.

MED. Thy real motive was not what thou sayst,
But a Barbarian wife, in thy old age,
Might have appeared to tarnish thy renown.

JAS. Be well assured, love urged me not to take
The daughter of the monarch to my bed.
But 'twas my wish to save you from distress,
As I already have declared, and raise
Some royal brothers to our former sons,
Strengthening with fresh supports our shattered house.

MED. May that prosperity which brings remorse
Be never mine, nor riches such as sting
The soul with anguish.

JAS. Are you not aware
You soon will change your mind and grow more wise?
Forbear to spurn the blessings you possess,
Nor droop beneath imaginary woes,
When you are happy.

MED. Scoff at my distress,
For thou hast an asylum to receive thee:
But from this land am I constrained to roam
A lonely exile.

JAS. This was your own choice:
Accuse none else.

MED. What have I done—betrayed
My plighted faith and sought a foreign bed?

JAS. You uttered impious curses 'gainst the king.

MED. I also in thy mansions am accursed.

JAS. With you I on these subjects will contend

No longer. But speak freely, what relief,
Or for the children or your exiled state,
You from my prosperous fortunes would receive:
For with a liberal hand am I inclined
My bounties to confer, and hence despatch
Such tokens, as to hospitable kindness
Will recommend you. Woman, to refuse
These offers were mere folly; from your soul
Banish resentment, and no trifling gain
Will hence ensue.

MED. No use I of thy friends
Will make, nor aught accept; thy presents spare,
For nothing which the wicked man can give
Proves beneficial.

JAS. I invoke the gods
To witness that I gladly would supply
You and your children with whate'er ye need:
But you these favours loathe, and with disdain
Repel your friends: hence an increase of woe
Shall be your lot.

MED. Be gone; for thou, with love
For thy young bride inflamed, too long remain'st
Without the palace. Wed her: though perhaps
(Yet with submission to the righteous gods,
This I announce) such marriage thou mayst rue.

Exit JASON.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

Th' immoderate loves in their career,
Nor glory nor esteem attends,
But when the Cyprian queen descends
Benignant from her starry sphere,
No goddess can more justly claim
From man the grateful prayer.
Thy wrath, O Venus, still forbear,
Nor at my tender bosom aim
That venomed arrow, ever wont t' inspire
Winged from thy golden bow, the pangs of keen desire.

I. 2.

May I in modesty delight,
Best present which the gods can give,
Nor torn by jarring passions live
A prey to wrath and cankered spite,
Still envious of a rival's charms,
Nor rouse the endless strife
While on my soul another wife
Impresses vehement alarms:
On us, dread queen, thy mildest influence shed,
Thou who discern'st each crime that stains the nuptial bed.

II. I.

My native land, and dearest home!
May I ne'er know an exiled state,
Nor be it ever my sad fate
While from thy well-known bourn I roam,
My hopeless anguish to bemoan!
Rather let death, let death
Take at that hour my forfeit breath,
For surely never was there known
On earth a curse so great as to exceed,
From his loved country torn, the wretched exile's need.

II. 2.

These eyes attest thy piteous tale,
Which not from fame alone we know;
But, O thou royal dame, thy woe
No generous city doth bewail,
Nor one among thy former friends.
Abhorred by Heaven and earth,
Perish the wretch devoid of worth,
Engrossed by mean and selfish ends,
Whose heart expands not those he loved to aid;
Never may I lament attachments thus repaid.

ÆGEUS, MEDEA, CHORUS.

ÆG. Medea, hail! for no man can devise
Terms more auspicious to accost his friends.
MED. And you, O son of wise Pandion, hail

Illustrious Ægeus. But to these domains
Whence came you?

ÆG. From Apollo's ancient shrine.

MED. But to that centre of the world, whence sounds
Prophetic issue, why did you repair?

ÆG. To question by what means I may obtain
A race of children.

MED. By the gods, inform me,
Are you still doomed to drag a childless life?

ÆG. Such is the influence of some adverse demon.

MED. Have you a wife, or did you never try
The nuptial yoke?

ÆG. With wedlock's sacred bands
I am not unacquainted.

MED. On the subject
Of children, what did Phœbus say?

ÆG. His words
Were such as mortals cannot comprehend.

MED. Am I allowed to know the god's reply?

ÆG. Thou surely art: such mystery to expound
There needs the help of thy sagacious soul.

MED. Inform me what the oracle pronounced,
If I may hear it.

ÆG. "The projecting foot,
Thou, of the vessel must not dare to loose"—

MED. Till you do what, or to what region come?

ÆG. "Till thou return to thy paternal lares."

MED. But what are you in need of, that you steer
Your bark to Corinth's shores?

ÆG. A king, whose name
Is Pittheus, o'er Trœzene's realm presides.

MED. That most religious man, they say, is son
Of Pelops.

ÆG. I with him would fain discuss
The god's prophetic voice.

MED. For he is wise,
And in this science long hath been expert.

ÆG. Dearest to me of those with whom I formed
A league of friendship in the embattled field.

MED. But, O may you be happy, and obtain
All that you wish for.
ÆG. Why those downcast eyes,
That wasted form?
MED. O Ægeus, he I wedded
To me hath proved of all mankind most base.
ÆG. What mean'st thou? In plain terms thy grief declare.
MED. Jason hath wronged me, though without a cause.
ÆG. Be more explicit, what injurious treatment
Complain'st thou of?
MED. To me hath he preferred
Another wife, the mistress of this house.
ÆG. Dared he to act so basely?
MED. Be assured
That I, whom erst he loved, am now forsaken.
ÆG. What amorous passion triumphs o'er his soul?
Or doth he loathe thy bed?
MED. 'Tis mighty love,
That to his first attachment makes him false.
ÆG. Let him depart then, if he be so void
Of honour as thou sayst.
MED. He sought to form
Alliance with a monarch.
ÆG. Who bestows
On him a royal bride? Conclude thy tale.
MED. Creon, the ruler of this land.
ÆG. Thy sorrows
Are then excusable.
MED. I am undone,
And banished hence.
ÆG. By whom? There's not a word
Thou utter'st but unfolds fresh scenes of woe.
MED. Me from this realm to exile Creon drives.
ÆG. Doth Jason suffer this? I cannot praise
Such conduct.
MED. Not in words: though he submits
Without reluctance. But I by that beard,
And by those knees, a wretched suppliant, crave
Your pity; see me not cast forth forlorn,

But to your realms and to your social hearth
Receive me as a guest; so may your
For children be accomplished by the gods,
And happiness your close of life attend.
But how important a discovery Fortune
To you here makes you are not yet apprised:
For destitute of heirs will I permit you
No longer to remain, but through my aid
Shall you have sons, such potent drugs I know.

ÆG. Various inducements urge me to comply
With this request, O woman: first an awe
For the immortal gods, and then the hope
That I the promised issue shall obtain.
On what my senses scarce can comprehend
I will rely. O that thy arts may prove
Effectual! Thee, if haply thou arriv'st
In my domain, with hospitable rites
Shall it be my endeavour to receive,
As justice dictates: but to thee, thus much
It previouly behoves me to announce:
I will not take thee with me from this realm;
But to my house if of thyself thou come
Thou a secure asylum there shalt find,
Nor will I yield thee up to any foe.
But hence without my aid must thou depart,
For I, from those who in this neighbouring land
Of Corinth entertain me as their guest,
Wish to incur no censure.

MED. Your commands
Shall be obeyed: but would you plight your faith
That you this promise will to me perform,
A noble friend in you shall I have found.

ÆG. Believ'st thou not? Whence rise these anxious doubts?

MED. In you I trust; though Pelias' hostile race
And Creon's hate pursue me: but, if bound
By the firm sanction of a solemn oath,
You will not suffer them with brutal force
To drag me from your realm, but having entered

Into such compact, and by every god
Sworn to protect me, still remain a friend,
Nor hearken to their embassies. My fortune
Is in its wane, but wealth to them belongs,
And an imperial mansion.

ÆG. In these words
Hast thou expressed great forethought: but if thus
Thou art disposed to act, I my consent
Will not refuse; for I shall be more safe
If to thy foes some plausible excuse
I can allege, and thee more firmly stablish.
But say thou first what gods I shall invoke.

MED. Swear by the earth on which we tread, the sun
My grandsire, and by all the race of gods.

ÆG. What action, or to do or to forbear?

MED. That from your land you never will expel,
Nor while you live consent that any foe
Shall tear me thence.

ÆG. By earth, the radiant sun,
And every god I swear, I to the terms
Thou hast proposed will steadfastly adhere.

MED. This may suffice. But what if you infringe
Your oath, what punishment will you endure?

ÆG. Each curse that can befall the impious man.

MED. Depart, and prosper: all things now advance
In their right track, and with the utmost speed
I to your city will direct my course,
When I have executed those designs
I meditate, and compassed what I wish. [*Exit* ÆGEUS.

CHOR. But thee, O king, may Maia's wingèd son
Lead to thy Athens; there mayst thou attain
All that thy soul desires, for thou to me,
O Ægeus, seem'st most generous.

MED. Awful Jove,
Thou too, O Justice, who art ever joined
With thundering Jove, and bright Hyperion's beams,
You I invoke. Now, O my friends, o'er those
I hate shall we prevail: 'tis the career
Of victory that we tread, and I at length

Have hopes the strictest vengeance on my foes
To execute: for where we most in need
Of a protector stood, appeared this stranger,
The haven of my counsels: we shall fix
Our cables to this poop, soon as we reach
That hallowed city where Minerva reigns.
But now to you the whole of my designs
Will I relate; look not for such a tale
As yields delight: some servant will I send
An interview with Jason to request,
And on his coming, in the softest words
Address him; say these matters are well pleasing
To me, and in the strongest terms applaud
That marriage with the daughter of the king,
Which now the traitor celebrates; then add,
"'Tis for our mutual good, 'tis rightly done."
But the request which I intend to make
Is that he here will let my children stay;
Not that I mean to leave them thus behind,
Exposed to insults in a hostile realm
From those I hate; but that my arts may slay
The royal maid: with presents in their hands,
A vesture finely wrought and golden crown,
Will I despatch them; these they to the bride
Shall bear, that she their exile may reverse:
If these destructive ornaments she take
And put them on, both she, and every one
Who touches her, shall miserably perish—
My presents with such drugs I will anoint.
Far as to this relates, here ends my speech.
But I with anguish think upon a deed
Of more than common horror, which remains
By me to be accomplished: for my sons
Am I resolved to slay, them from this arm
Shall no man rescue. When I thus have filled
With dire confusion Jason's wretched house,
I, from this land, yet reeking with the gore
Of my dear sons, will fly, and having dared
A deed most impious. For the scornful taunts

Of those we hate are not to be endured,
Happen what may. Can life be any gain
To me who have no country left, no home,
No place of refuge? Greatly did I err
When I forsook the mansions of my sire,
Persuaded by the flattery of that Greek
Whom I will punish, if just Heaven permit.
For he shall not again behold the children
I bore him while yet living. From his bride
Nor shall there issue any second race,
Since that vile woman by my baleful drugs
Vilely to perish have the Fates ordained.
None shall think lightly of me, as if weak,
Of courage void, or with a soul too tame,
But formed by Heaven in a far different mould,
The terror of my foes, and to my friends
Benignant: for most glorious are the lives
Of those who act with such determined zeal.

CHOR. Since thy design thus freely thou to us
Communicat'st, I, through a wish to serve
Thy interests, and a reverence for those laws
Which all mankind hold sacred, from thy purpose
Exhort thee to desist.

MED. This cannot be:
Yet I from you, because ye have not felt
Distress like mine, such language can excuse.

CHOR. Thy guiltless children wilt thou dare to slay?

MED. My husband hence more deeply shall I wound

CHOR. But thou wilt of all women be most wretched.

MED. No matter: all the counsels ye can give
Are now superfluous. But this instant go
And Jason hither bring; for on your faith,
In all things I depend; nor these resolves
Will you divulge if you your mistress love,
And feel a woman's interest in my wrongs.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

Heroes of Erectheus' race,
To the gods who owe your birth,
And in a long succession trace
Your sacred origin from earth,
Who on wisdom's fruit regale,
Purest breezes still inhale,
And behold skies ever bright,
Wandering through those haunted glades
Where fame relates that the Pierian maids,
Soothing the soul of man with chaste delight,
Taught Harmony to breathe her first enchanting tale.

I. 2.

From Cephisus' amber tide,
At the Cyprian queen's command,
As sing the Muses, are supplied
To refresh the thirsty land,
Fragrant gales of temperate air;
While around her auburn hair,
In a vivid chaplet twined
Never-fading roses bloom
And scent the champaign with their rich perfume,
Love comes in unison with wisdom joined,
Each virtue thrives if Beauty lend her fostering care.

II. 1.

For its holy streams renowned
Can that city, can that state
Where friendship's generous train are found
Shelter thee from public hate,
When, defiled with horrid guilt,
Thou thy children's blood hast spilt?
Think on this atrocious deed
Ere thy dagger aim the blow:
Around thy knees our suppliant arms we throw;
O doom not, doom them not to bleed.

II. 2.

How can thy relentless heart
All humanity disclaim,
Thy lifted arm perform its part?
Lost to a sense of honest shame,
Canst thou take their lives away,
And these guiltless children slay?
Soon as thou thy sons shalt view,
How wilt thou the tear restrain,
Or with their blood thy ruthless hands distain,
When prostrate they for mercy sue?

JASON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

JAS. I at your call am come; for though such hate
To me you bear, you shall not be denied
In this request; but let me hear what else
You would solicit.

MED. Jason, I of thee
Crave pardon for the hasty words I spoke;
Since just it were that thou shouldst bear my wrath,
When by such mutual proofs of love our union
Hath been cemented. For I reasoned thus,
And in these terms reproached myself: "O wretch,
Wretch that I am, what madness fires my breast?
Or why 'gainst those who counsel me aright
Such fierce resentment harbour? What just cause
Have I to hate the rulers of this land,
My husband too, who acts but for my good
In his espousals with the royal maid,
That to my sons he hence may add a race
Of noble brothers? Shall not I appease
The tempest of my soul? Why, when the gods
Confer their choicest blessings, should I grieve?
Have not I helpless children? Well I know
That we are banished from Thessalia's realm
And left without a friend." When I these thoughts
Maturely had revolved, I saw how great
My folly and how groundless was my wrath.

Now therefore I commend, now deem thee wise
In forming this connection for my sake:
But I was void of wisdom, or had borne
A part in these designs, the genial bed
Obsequiously attended, and with joy
Performed each menial office for the bride.
I will not speak in too reproachful terms
Of my own sex; but we, weak women, are
What nature formed us; therefore our defects
Thou must not imitate, nor yet return
Folly for folly. I submit and own
My judgment was erroneous, but at length
Have I formed better counsels. O my sons,
Come hither, leave the palace, from those doors
Advance, and in a soft persuasive strain
With me unite your father to accost,
Forget past enmity, and to your friends
Be reconciled, for 'twixt us is a league
Of peace established, and my wrath subsides.

[*The* SONS *of* JASON *and* MEDEA *ent*

Take hold of his right hand. Ah me, how great
Are my afflictions oft as I revolve
A deed of darkness in my labouring soul!
How long, alas! my sons, are ye ordained
To live, how long to stretch forth those dear arms?
Wretch that I am! how much am I disposed
To weep! how subject to each fresh alarm!
For I at length desisting from that strife,
Which with your sire I rashly did maintain,
Feel gushing tears bedew my tender cheek.

CHOR. Fresh tears too from these eyes have forced their way;
And may no greater ill than that which now
We suffer, overtake us!

JAS. I applaud
Your present conduct, and your former rage
Condemn not; for 'tis natural that the race
Of women should be angry when their lord
For a new consort trucks them. But your heart
Is for the better changed, and you, though late,

At length acknowledge the resistless power
Of reason; this is acting like a dame
Endued with prudence. But for you, my sons,
Abundant safety your considerate sire
Hath with the favour of the gods procured,
For ye, I trust, shall with my future race
Bear the first rank in this Corinthian realm,
Advance to full maturity; the rest,
Aided by each benignant god, your father
Shall soon accomplish. Virtuously trained up
May I behold you at a riper age
Obtain pre-eminence o'er those I hate.
But, ha! Why with fresh tears do you thus keep
Those eyelids moist? From your averted cheeks
Why is the colour fled, or why these words
Receive you not with a complacent ear?

MED. Nothing: my thoughts were busied for these children.

JAS. Be of good courage, and for them depend
On my protecting care.

MED. I will obey,
Nor disbelieve the promise thou hast made:
But woman, ever frail, is prone to shed
Involuntary tears.

JAS. But why bewail
With such deep groans these children?

MED. Them I bore;
And that our sons might live, while to the gods
Thou didst address thy vows, a pitying thought
Entered my soul; 'twas whether this could be.
But of th' affairs on which thou com'st to hold
This conference with me, have I told a part
Already, and to thee will now disclose
The sequel: since the rulers of this land
Resolve to banish me, as well I know
That it were best for me to give no umbrage,
Or to the king of Corinth, or to thee,
By dwelling here: because I to this house
Seem to bear enmity, from these domains
Will I depart: but urge thy suit to Creon,

That under thy paternal care our sons
May be trained up, nor from this realm expelled.
JAS. Though doubtful of success, I yet am bound
To make th' attempt.
MED. Thou rather shouldst enjoin
Thy bride her royal father to entreat,
That he these children's exile may reverse.
JAS. With pleasure; and I doubt not but on her,
If like her sex humane, I shall prevail.
MED. To aid thee in this difficult emprise
Shall be my care, for I to her will send
Gifts that I know in beauty far exceed
The gorgeous works of man; a tissued vest
And golden crown the children shall present,
But with the utmost speed these ornaments
One of thy menial train must hither bring,
For not with one, but with ten thousand blessings
Shall she be gratified; thee, best of men,
Obtaining for the partner of her bed,
And in possession of those splendid robes
Which erst the sun my grandsire did bestow
On his descendants: take them in your hands,
My children, to the happy royal bride
Instantly bear them, and in dower bestow,
For such a gift as ought not to be scorned
Shall she receive.
JAS. Why rashly part with these?
Of tissued robes or gold can you suppose
The palace destitute? These trappings keep,
Nor to another give: for if the dame
On me place real value, well I know
My love she to all treasures will prefer.
MED. Speak not so hastily: the gods themselves
By gifts are swayed, as fame relates; and gold
Hath a far greater influence o'er the souls
Of mortals than the most persuasive words:
With fortune, the propitious heavens conspire
To add fresh glories to thy youthful bride,
All here submits to her despotic sway.

But I my children's exile would redeem,
Though at the cost of life, not gold alone.
But these adjacent mansions of the king
Soon as ye enter, O ye little ones,
Your sire's new consort and my queen entreat
That ye may not be banished from this land:
At the same time these ornaments present,
For most important is it that these gifts
With her own hands the royal dame receive.
Go forth, delay not, and, if ye succeed,
Your mother with the welcome tidings greet.

[*Exeunt* JASON *and* SONS.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

Now from my soul each hope is fled,
I deem those hapless children dead,
They rush to meet the wound:
Mistrustful of no latent pest
Th' exulting bride will seize the gorgeous vest,
Her auburn tresses crowned
By baleful Pluto, shall she stand,
And take the presents with an eager hand.

I. 2.

The splendid robe of thousand dyes
Will fascinate her raptured eyes,
And tempt her till she wear
The golden diadem, arrayed
To meet her bridegroom in th' infernal shade
She thus into the snare
Of death shall be surprised by fate,
Nor 'scape remorseless Atè's direful hate.

II. 1.

But as for thee whose nuptials bring
The proud alliance of a king,

'Midst dangers unespied
Thou madly rushing, aid'st the blow
Ordained by Heaven to lay thy children low,
And thy lamented bride:
O man, how little dost thou know
That o'er thy head impends severest woe!

II. 2.

Thy anguish I no less bemoan,
No less for thee, O mother, groan,
Bent on a horrid deed,
Thy children who resolv'st to slay,
Nor fear'st to take their guiltless lives away.
Those innocents must bleed,
Because, disdainful of thy charms,
The husband flies to a new consort's arms.

ATTENDANT, SONS, MEDEA, CHORUS.

ATT. Your sons, my honoured mistress, are set free
From banishment; in her own hands those gifts
With courtesy the royal bride received;
Hence have your sons obtained their peace.

MED. No matter.

ATT. Why stand you in confusion, when befriended
By prosperous fortune?

MED. Ah!

ATT. This harsh reception
Accords not with the tidings which I bring.

MED. Alas! and yet again I say, alas!

ATT. Have I related with unconscious tongue
Some great calamity, by the fond hope
Of bearing glad intelligence misled?

MED. For having told what thou hast told, no blame
To thee do I impute.

ATT. But on the ground
Why fix those eyes, and shed abundant tears?

MED. Necessity constrains me: for the gods
Of Erebus and I in evil hour
Our baleful machinations have devised.

ATT. Be of good cheer; for in your children still
Are you successful.

MED. 'Midst the realms of night
Others I first will plunge. Ah, wretched me!

ATT. Not you alone are from your children torn,
Mortal you are, and therefore must endure
Calamity with patience.

MED. I these counsels
Will practise: but go thou into the palace,
And for the children whatsoe'er to-day
Is requisite, make ready. [*Exit* ATTENDANT.
O my sons!
My sons! ye have a city and a house
Where, leaving hapless me behind, without
A mother ye for ever shall reside.
But I to other realms an exile go,
Ere any help from you I could derive,
Or see you blest; the hymeneal pomp,
The bride, the genial couch, for you adorn,
And in these hands the kindled torch sustain.
How wretched am I through my own perverseness!
You, O my sons, I then in vain have nurtured,
In vain have toiled, and, wasted with fatigue,
Suffered the pregnant matron's grievous throes.
On you, in my afflictions, many hopes
I founded erst: that ye with pious care
Would foster my old age, and on the bier
Extend me after death—much envied lot
Of mortals; but these pleasing anxious thoughts
Are vanished now; for, losing you, a life
Of bitterness and anguish shall I lead.
But as for you, my sons, with those dear eyes
Fated no more your mother to behold,
Hence are ye hastening to a world unknown.
Why do ye gaze on me with such a look
Of tenderness, or wherefore smile? for these
Are your last smiles. Ah wretched, wretched me!
What shall I do? My resolution fails.
Sparkling with joy now I their looks have seen,

My friends, I can no more. To those past schemes
I bid adieu, and with me from this land
My children will convey. Why should I cause
A twofold portion of distress to fall
On my own head, that I may grieve the sire
By punishing his sons? This shall not be:
Such counsels I dismiss. But in my purpose
What means this change? Can I prefer derision,
And with impunity permit the foe
To 'scape? My utmost courage I must rouse:
For the suggestion of these tender thoughts
Proceeds from an enervate heart. My sons,
Enter the regal mansion. [*Exeunt* SONS.
As for those
Who deem that to be present were unholy
While I the destined victims offer up,
Let them see to it. This uplifted arm
Shall never shrink. Alas! alas! my soul
Commit not such a deed. Unhappy woman,
Desist and spare thy children; we will live
Together, they in foreign realms shall cheer
Thy exile. No, by those avenging fiends
Who dwell with Pluto in the realms beneath,
This shall not be, nor will I ever leave
My sons to be insulted by their foes.
They certainly must die; since then they must,
I bore and I will slay them: 'tis a deed
Resolved on, nor my purpose will I change.
Full well I know that now the royal bride
Wears on her head the magic diadem,
And in the variegated robe expires:
But, hurried on by fate, I tread a path
Of utter wretchedness, and them will plunge
Into one yet more wretched. To my sons
Fain would I say: "O stretch forth your right hands,
Ye children, for your mother to embrace.
O dearest hands, ye lips to me most dear,
Engaging features and ingenuous looks,
May ye be blest, but in another world;

For by the treacherous conduct of your sire
Are ye bereft of all this earth bestowed.
Farewell, sweet kisses—tender limbs, farewell!
And fragrant breath! I never more can bear
To look on you, my children." My afflictions
Have conquered me; I now am well aware
What crimes I venture on: but rage, the cause
Of woes most grievous to the human race,
Over my better reason hath prevailed.

CHOR. In subtle questions I full many a time
Have heretofore engaged, and this great point
Debated, whether woman should extend
Her search into abstruse and hidden truths.
But we too have a Muse, who with our sex
Associates to expound the mystic lore
Of wisdom, though she dwell not with us all.
Yet haply a small number may be found,
Among the multitude of females, dear
To the celestial Muses. I maintain,
They who in total inexperience live,
Nor ever have been parents, are more happy
Than they to whom much progeny belongs.
Because the childless, having never tried
Whether more pain or pleasure from their offspring
To mortals rises, 'scape unnumbered toils.
But I observe that they, whose fruitful house
Is with a lovely race of infants filled,
Are harassed with perpetual cares; how first
To train them up in virtue, and whence leave
Fit portions for their sons; but on the good
Or worthless, whether they these toils bestow
Remains involved in doubt. I yet must name
One evil the most grievous, to which all
The human race is subject; some there are
Who for their sons have gained sufficient wealth,
Seen them to full maturity advance,
And decked with every virtue, when, by fate
If thus it be ordained, comes death unseen
And hurries them to Pluto's gloomy realm.

Can it be any profit to the gods
To heap the loss of children, that one ill
Than all the rest more bitter, on mankind?

MED. My friends, with anxious expectation long
Here have I waited, from within to learn
How fortune will dispose the dread event.
But one of Jason's servants I behold
With breathless speed advancing: his looks show
That he some recent mischief would relate.

MESSENGER, MEDEA, CHORUS.

MES. O thou, who impiously hast wrought a deed
Of horror, fly, Medea, from this land,
Fly with such haste as not to leave the bark
Or from the car alight.

MED. What crime, to merit
A banishment like this, have I committed?

MES. By thy enchantments is the royal maid
This instant dead, and Creon, too, her sire.

MED. Most glorious are the tidings you relate:
Henceforth shall you be numbered with my friends
And benefactors.

MES. Ha! what words are these?
Dost thou preserve thy senses yet entire?
O woman, hath not madness fired thy brain?
The wrongs thou to the royal house hast done
Hear'st thou with joy, nor shudder'st at the tale?

MED. Somewhat I have in answer to your speech:
But be not too precipitate, my friend;
Inform me how they died, for twofold joy
Wilt thou afford, if wretchedly they perished.

MES. When with their father thy two sons arrived
And went into the mansion of the bride,
We servants, who had shared thy griefs, rejoiced;
For a loud rumour instantly prevailed
That all past strife betwixt thy lord and thee
Was reconciled. Some kissed the children's hands,
And some their auburn tresses. I with joy
To those apartments where the women dwell

Attended them. Our mistress, the new object
Of homage such as erst to thee was paid,
Ere she beheld thy sons on Jason cast
A look of fond desire: but then she veiled
Her eyes, and turned her pallid cheeks away
Disgusted at their coming, till his voice
Appeased her anger with these gentle words:
"O be not thou inveterate 'gainst thy friends,
But lay aside disdain, thy beauteous face
Turn hither, and let amity for those
Thy husband loves still warm that generous breast.
Accept these gifts, and to thy father sue,
That, for my sake, the exile of my sons
He will remit." Soon as the princess saw
Thy glittering ornaments, she could resist
No longer, but to all her lord's requests
Assented, and before thy sons were gone
Far from the regal mansion with their sire,
The vest, resplendent with a thousand dyes,
Put on, and o'er her loosely floating hair
Placing the golden crown, before the mirror
Her tresses braided, and with smiles surveyed
Th' inanimated semblance of her charms:
Then rising from her seat across the palace
Walked with a delicate and graceful step,
In the rich gifts exulting, and oft turned
Enraptured eyes on her own stately neck,
Reflected to her view: but now a scene
Of horror followed; her complexion changed,
And she reeled backward, trembling every limb;
Scarce did her chair receive her as she sunk
In time to save her falling to the ground.
One of her menial train, an aged dame,
Possest with an idea that the wrath
Either of Pan or of some god unknown
Her mistress had invaded, in shrill tone
Poured forth a vow to Heaven, till from her mouth
She saw foam issue, in their sockets roll
Her wildly glaring eyeballs, and the blood

Leave her whole frame; a shriek, that differed far
From her first plaints, then gave she. In an instant
This to her father's house, and that to tell
The bridegroom the mischance which had befallen
His consort, rushed impetuous; through the dome
The frequent steps of those who to and fro
Ran in confusion did resound. But soon
As the fleet courser at the goal arrives,
She who was silent, and had closed her eyes,
Roused from her swoon, and burst forth into groans
Most dreadful, for 'gainst her two evils warred:
Placed on her head the golden crown poured forth
A wondrous torrent of devouring flames,
And the embroidered robes, thy children's gifts,
Preyed on the hapless virgin's tender flesh;
Covered with fire she started from her seat
Shaking her hair, and from her head the crown
With violence attempting to remove,
But still more firmly did the heated gold
Adhere, and the fanned blaze with double lustre
Burst forth as she her streaming tresses shook;
Subdued by fate, at length she to the ground
Fell prostrate; scarce could any one have known her
Except her father; for those radiant eyes
Dropped from their sockets, that majestic face
Its wonted features lost, and blood with fire
Ran down her head in intermingled streams,
While from her bones the flesh, like weeping pitch,
Melted away, through the consuming power
Of those unseen enchantments; 'twas a sight
Most horrible: all feared to touch the corpse,
For her disastrous end had taught us caution.
Meanwhile her hapless sire, who knew not aught
Of this calamity, as he with haste
Entered the palace, stumbled o'er her body;
Instantly shrieking out, then with his arms
Infolded, kissed it oft, and, "O my child,
My wretched child," exclaimed; "what envious god,
Author of thy dishonourable fall,

Of thee bereaves an old decrepit man
Whom the grave claims? With thee I wish to die,
My daughter." Scarcely had the hoary father
These lamentations ended; to uplift
His feeble body striving, he adhered
(As ivy with its pliant tendrils clings
Around the laurel) to the tissued vest.
Dire was the conflict; he to raise his knee
From earth attempted, but his daughter's corse
Still held him down, or if with greater force
He dragged it onward, from his bones he tore
The aged flesh: at length he sunk, and breathed
In agonizing pangs his soul away;
For he against such evil could bear up
No longer. To each other close in death
The daughter and her father lie: their fate
Demands our tears. Warned by my words, with haste
From this domain convey thyself, or vengeance
Will overtake thee for this impious deed.
Not now for the first time do I esteem
Human affairs a shadow. Without fear
Can I pronounce, they who appear endued
With wisdom, and most plausibly trick out
Specious harangues, deserve to be accounted
The worst of fools. The man completely blest
Exists not. Some in overflowing wealth
May be more fortunate, but none are happy.

CHOR. Heaven its collected store of evil seems
This day resolved with justice to pour down
On perjured Jason. Thy untimely fate
How do we pity, O thou wretched daughter
Of Creon, who in Pluto's mansions go'st
To celebrate thy nuptial feast.

MED. My friends,
I am resolved, as soon as I have slain
My children, from these regions to depart,
Nor through inglorious sloth will I abandon
My sons to perish by detested hands;
They certainly must die: since then they must,

I bore and I will slay them. O my heart!
Be armed with tenfold firmness. What avails it
To loiter, when inevitable ills
Remain to be accomplished? Take the sword,
And, O my hand, on to the goal that ends
Their life, nor let one intervening thought
Of pity or maternal tenderness
Suspend thy purpose: for this one short day
Forget how fondly thou didst love thy sons,
How bring them forth, and after that lament
Their cruel fate: although thou art resolved
To slay, yet hast thou ever held them dear.
But I am of all women the most wretched.

[*Exit* MEDEA.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

Earth, and thou sun, whose fervid blaze
From pole to pole illumes each distant land,
View this abandoned woman, ere she raise
Against her children's lives a ruthless hand;
For from thy race, divinely bright,
They spring, and should the sons of gods be slain
By man, 'twere dreadful. O restrain
Her fury, thou celestial source of light,
Ere she with blood pollute your regal dome,
Chased by the demons hence let this Erinnys roam.

II.

The pregnant matron's throes in vain
Hast thou endured, and borne a lovely race,
O thou, who o'er th' inhospitable main,
Where the Cyanean rocks scarce leave a space,
Thy daring voyage didst pursue.
Why, O thou wretch, thy soul doth anger rend,
Such as in murder soon must end?
They who with kindred gore are stained shall rue
Their guilt inexpiable: full well I know
The gods will on this house inflict severest woe.

1st SON [*within.*] Ah me! what can I do, or whither fly
To 'scape a mother's arm?

2nd SON [*within.*] I cannot tell:
For, O my dearest brother, we are lost.

CHOR. Heard you the children's shrieks? I (O thou dame,
Whom woes and evil fortune still attend)
Will rush into the regal dome, from death
Resolved to snatch thy sons.

1st SON [*within.*] We by the gods
Conjure you to protect us in this hour
Of utmost peril, for the treacherous snare
Hath caught us, and we perish by the sword.

CHOR. Art thou a rock, O wretch, or steel, to slay
With thine own hand that generous race of sons
Whom thou didst bear? I hitherto have heard
But of one woman, who in ancient days
Smote her dear children, Ino, by the gods
With frenzy stung, when Jove's malignant queen
Distracted from her mansion drove her forth.
But she, yet reeking with the impious gore
Of her own progeny, into the waves
Plunged headlong from the ocean's craggy beach,
And shared with her two sons one common fate.
Can there be deeds more horrible than these
Left for succeeding ages to produce?
Disastrous union with the female sex,
How great a source of woes art thou to man!

JASON, CHORUS.

JAS. Ye dames who near the portals stand, is she
Who hath committed these atrocious crimes,
Medea, in the palace, or by flight
Hath she retreated? For beneath the ground
Must she conceal herself, or, borne on wings,
Ascend the heights of Ether, to avoid
The vengeance due for Corinth's royal house.
Having destroyed the rulers of the land,
Can she presume she shall escape unhurt
From these abodes? But less am I concerned

On her account, than for my sons; since they
Whom she hath injured will on her inflict
Due punishment: but hither am I come
To save my children's lives, lest on their heads
The noble Creon's kindred should retaliate
That impious murder by their mother wrought.

CHOR. Thou know'st not yet, O thou unhappy man,
What ills thou art involved in, or these words
Had not escaped thee.

JAS. Ha, what ills are these
Thou speak'st of? Would she also murder me?

CHOR. By their own mother's hand thy sons are slain.

JAS. What can you mean? How utterly, O woman,
Have you undone me!

CHOR. Be assured thy children
Are now no more.

JAS. Where was it, or within
Those mansions or without, that she destroyed
Our progeny?

CHOR. As soon as thou these doors
Hast oped, their weltering corses wilt thou view.

JAS. Loose the firm bars and bolts of yonder gates
With speed, ye servants, that I may behold
This scene of twofold misery, the remains
Of the deceased, and punish her who slew them.

MEDEA, *in a chariot drawn by dragons*, JASON, CHORUS.

MED. With levers wherefore dost thou shake those doors
In quest of them who are no more, and me
Who dared to perpetrate the bloody deed?
Desist from such unprofitable toil:
But if there yet be aught that thou with me
Canst want, speak freely whatsoe'er thou wilt:
For with that hand me never shalt thou reach,
Such steeds the sun my grandsire gives to whirl
This chariot and protect me from my foes.

JAS. O most abandoned woman, by the gods,
By me and all the human race abhorred,
Who with the sword could pierce the sons you bore,

And ruin me, a childless wretched man,
Yet after you this impious deed have dared
To perpetrate, still view the radiant sun
And fostering earth; may vengeance overtake you!
For I that reason have regained which erst
Forsook me, when to the abodes of Greece
I from your home, from a Barbarian realm,
Conveyed you, to your sire a grievous bane,
And the corrupt betrayer of that land
Which nurtured you. Some envious god first roused
Your evil genius from the shades of hell
For my undoing: after you had slain
Your brother at the altar, you embarked
In the famed Argo. Deeds like these a life
Of guilt commenced; with me in wedlock joined,
You bore those sons, whom you have now destroyed
Because I left your bed. No Grecian dame
Would e'er have ventured on a deed so impious;
Yet I to them preferred you for my bride:
This was a hostile union, and to me
The most destructive; for my arms received
No woman, but a lioness more fell
Than Tuscan Scylla. Vainly should I strive
To wound you with reproaches numberless,
For you are grown insensible of shame!
Vile sorceress, and polluted with the blood
Of your own children, perish—my hard fate
While I lament, for I shall ne'er enjoy
My lovely bride, nor with those sons, who owe
To me their birth and nurture, ever hold
Sweet converse. They, alas! can live no more,
Utterly lost to their desponding sire.

MED. Much could I say in answer to this charge,
Were not the benefits from me received,
And thy abhorred ingratitude, well known
To Jove, dread sire. Yet was it not ordained,
Scorning my bed, that thou shouldst lead a life
Of fond delight, and ridicule my griefs;
Nor that the royal virgin thou didst wed,

Or Creon, who to thee his daughter gave,
Should drive me from these regions unavenged.
A lioness then call me if thou wilt,
Or by the name of Scylla, whose abode
Was in Etrurian caverns. For thy heart,
As justice prompted, in my turn I wounded.

JAS. You grieve, and are the partner of my woes.

MED. Be well assured I am: but what assuages
My grief is this, that thou no more canst scoff.

JAS. How vile a mother, O my sons, was yours!

MED. How did ye perish through your father's lust!

JAS. But my right hand was guiltless of their death.

MED. Not so thy cruel taunts, and that new marriage.

JAS. Was my new marriage a sufficient cause
For thee to murder them?

MED. Canst thou suppose
Such wrongs sit light upon the female breast?

JAS. On a chaste woman's; but your soul abounds
With wickedness.

MED. Thy sons are now no more,
This will afflict thee.

JAS. O'er your head, alas!
They now two evil geniuses impend.

MED. The gods know who these ruthless deeds began.

JAS. They know the hateful temper of your soul.

MED. In detestation thee I hold, and loathe
Thy conversation.

JAS. Yours too I abhor;
But we with ease may settle on what terms
To part for ever.

MED. Name those terms. Say how
Shall I proceed? For such my ardent wish.

JAS. Let me inter the dead, and o'er them weep.

MED. Thou shalt not. For their corses with this hand
Am I resolved to bury in the grove
Sacred to awful Juno, who protects
The citadel of Corinth, lest their foes
Insult them, and with impious rage pluck up
The monumental stone. I in this realm

Of Sisyphus moreover will ordain
A solemn festival and mystic rites,
To make a due atonement for my guilt
In having slain them. To Erectheus' land
I now am on my road, where I shall dwell
With Ægeus, great Pandion's son; but thou
Shalt vilely perish as thy crimes deserve,
Beneath the shattered relics of thy bark,
The Argo, crushed; such is the bitter end
Of our espousals and thy faith betrayed.

JAS. May the Erinnys of our slaughtered sons,
And justice, who requites each murderous deed,
Destroy you utterly!

MED. Will any god
Or demon hear thy curses, O thou wretch,
False to thy oath, and to the sacred laws
Of hospitality?

JAS. Most impious woman,
Those hands yet reeking with your children's gore—

MED. Go to the palace, and inter thy bride.

JAS. Bereft of both my sons, I thither go.

MED. Not yet enough lament'st thou: to increase
Thy sorrows, mayst thou live till thou art old!

JAS. Ye dearest children.

MED. To their mother dear,
But not to thee.

JAS. Yet them have you destroyed.

MED. That I might punish thee.

JAS. One more fond kiss
On their loved lips, ah me! would I imprint.

MED. Now wouldst thou speak to them, and in thine arms
Clasp those whom living thou didst banish hence.

JAS. Allow me, I conjure you by the gods,
My children's tender bodies to embrace.

MED. Thou shalt not: these presumptuous words in vain
By thee were hazarded.

JAS. Jove, hear'st thou this,
How I with scorn am driven away, how wronged
By that detested lioness, whose fangs

Have slain her children? Yet shall my loud plaints,
While here I fix my seat, if 'tis allowed,
And this be possible, call down the gods
To witness that you hinder me from touching
My murdered sons, and paying the deceased
Funereal honours. Would to Heaven I ne'er
Had seen them born to perish by your hand!

CHOR. Throned on Olympus, with his sovereign nod,
Jove unexpectedly performs the schemes
Divine foreknowledge planned; our firmest hopes
Oft fail us: but the god still finds the means
Of compassing what man could ne'er have looked for;
And thus doth this important business end.

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